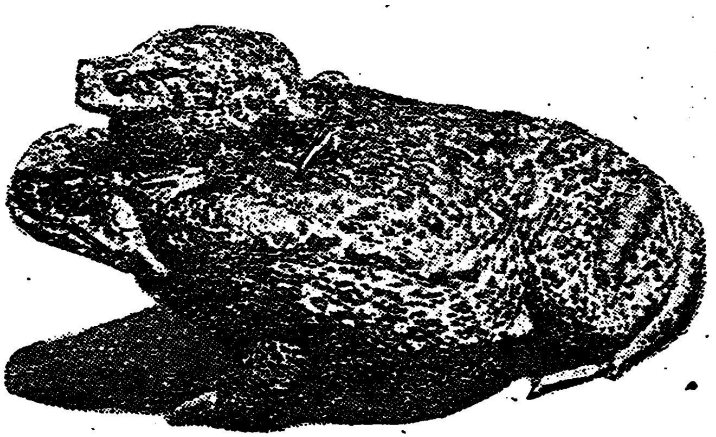
Flying Snake

May 2018 Volume 5 no. 13



MONSTER TOAD—Largest frog ever seen at London Zoo, weighing five pounds, and shown in comparison with ordinary frog, has just been received from South America. (Int'l Newsreel)

Copyright, 1923, International News Service

Trenton Evening Times Sept 1st 1923

SOME MONSTER TOAD STORIES

Exploding Ostrich Egg · Weird Clouds · Fish found with swallowed ring · Dog Poo Powers Light · Bear Lake Monster · Giant Scottish Wasp Old Spanish Mystery Cat · Black Triton in Somerset · Strangeness of Whales · Greek Coin in Odd Place · And More!

FLYING SNAKE SUBSCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES

ESTABLISHED BY RICHARD MUIRHEAD AKA DR DEVO IN 2011

Flying Snake appears about twice a year depending on the time I can find to research for items to include in it and whether or not I have recovered from dancing `The Poot` at Macclesfield`s clubs and pubs. Cover price is £3.99, £ 12 for 3 issues, please send a cheque for £3.99 etc to Richard Muirhead NOT Flying Snake, to:

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For further info on Flying Snake see https:// www.cosmicpolymath.com/blog

Contributions on all obscure aspects of cryptozoology, Forteana & folklore welcome at Editor`s say-so.

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Dr Devo`s Diary

"For I pray for the introduction of new creatures into this island. For I pray God for the ostriches of Salisbury Plain, the beavers of the Medway and silver fishes of Thames." Christopher Smart `Rejoice in the Lamb.` Poet, naturalist, lunatic. (1722-1771)

Wey hey hey it`s that exciting moment again when Flying Snake drops onto your door mat. Issue 13! It is still printed by Mailbox Macclesfield as it has been for the last 7 years. Please support your community small businesses or every other business in your main street will either sell burgers or hair cuts, it`s hard to decide which I`d prefer as I`m overweight therefore should avoid junk food, but nor do I want to cut my hair!

Flying Snake 13 has taken so long (again!) to finish for the simple but tedious fact that I have been relying on two (sometimes three) hours a day maximum at the library in town to work on it. From mid April though I have had a shiny white new desk top which has Microsoft Publisher on it until April 2019. It`s a Lenovo, the only reason I say this isn`t to be a computer-snob, but I had the idea in what passes for my mind that Lenovo`s were named after Vladimir I. Lenin!! (Why did the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution in 2017 pass with such little acknowledgement?) But back to cryptozoology. With FS 13 we have monster toads, exploding ostrich eggs, Irish opposums, Japanese horned sea monsters, Steller`s Sea Cow, (almost as likely surely as Orang Pendek to be still around?) Lake Lugano`s strange fauna, the Bear Lake, U.S.A lake monster, etc, etc. I wanted to include Part Two of American kangaroo anomalies but that plan hopped off into the distance like my sanity has done in the past . Talking of (in) sanity, on February 14th 2018 the psychiatric powers-that-be here took me off lithium after 18 years. REJOICE! Back briefly to matters Fortean, I am compiling an index to FS 1 –12, which if it isn`t included with this issue, will very soon be ready. This is Dr Devo saying, DANCE THE POOT AND BOMBS AWAY!!

Strange Clouds

Richard Muirhead

Left: The Courier-Mail Brisbane February 17th 1937 © Trove

STRANGE RIBBON OF CLOUD
Formation Seen [redacted]
in North

A cool southerly wind impinging upon a current of warm, moist air from the north, it is believed, caused the strange cloud formation shown in the accompanying picture. This ribbon of cloud which was seen at Mareeba, Cairns, and Atherton on February 2, stretched from horizon to horizon at Mareeba.

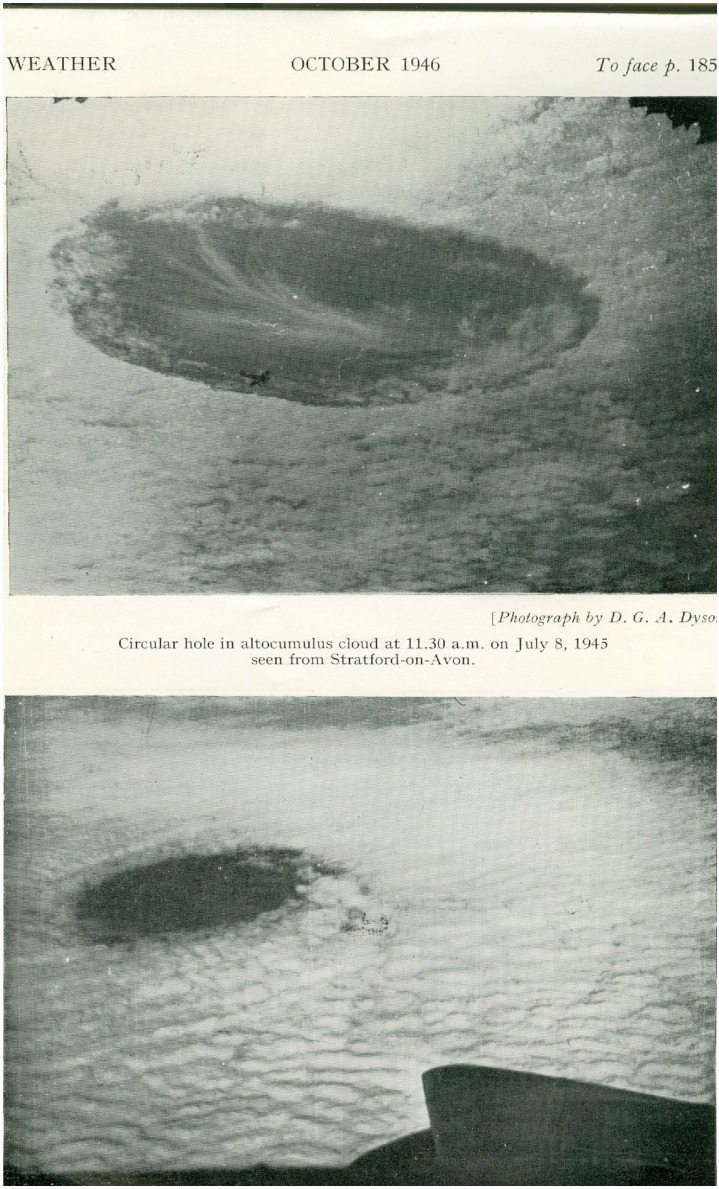
A correspondent at Mareeba, who sent pictures of the cloud to The Courier-Mail, said there were no other clouds at the time.

The Commonwealth Divisional Meteorologist (Mr. A. S. Richards), who examined the pictures yesterday, said that on February 2 there was in the region where the cloud was seen a warm, moist northerly current, in association with a cooler southerly. The meeting of these two streams would cause condensation of the moisture, and probably the cloud formation.

Such "rolls" of cloud were commonly seen in the southern States of Australia when a southerly wind met warmer air. The approach of a storm could often be seen by this cloud roll.

Although not common in Queensland, such occurrences were quite possible. In the south cloud rolls were usually accompanied by other cloud, and it was quite possible that further cloud developed in North Queensland after the ribbon was seen on February 2.

A hole of oval shape in the sky over Stratford-on-Avon West Midlands U.K , 1945 .Weather magazine, October 1946, author`s own collection. © Royal Meteorological Society and D.G.A. Dyson



WEATHER OCTOBER 1946 *To face p.* 185

[*Photograph by D. G. A. Dyso*

Circular hole in altocumulus cloud at 11.30 a.m. on July 8, 1945
seen from Stratford-on-Avon.

Strange cloud in the shape of Lincoln`s head

STRANGE CLOUD IMAGE OF LINCOLN AT CAMP SHERMAN

CAMP SHERMAN, Chillicothe, O., Sept. 12.—Members of the 84th (Lincoln) division, here, which include many Indiana men, who saw recently a cloud image over the cantonment, say they believe the division will be the luckiest one in France when it gets "over there."

Some of the men who saw the cloud declare it was a perfect likeness of the martyred president after whom the division is named. It disappeared for a moment and then reappeared in another cloud in a few minutes. Hundreds of men watched the strange cloud formation.

Soldiers departing from Camp Sherman hereafter to eastern ports of embarkation must carry numerous articles. The latest order named the following among the various things to be taken by men for overseas duty:

One rifle, oiler case, bayonet and scabbard, 10 cartridges, gun sling, pistol, or revolver, holster, fur magbelt and layard, cartridge belt, can of bacon, can of meat, canteen, canteen cover, cup, fork, have-sack, helmet, knife, pack carrier, pouch for first aid, spoon, first aid packet, one blanket, waist belt, woolen breeches, overseas cap, one hat and cord, three chevrons, one overcoat, service coat, one dubbin, pair woolen gloves and two pairs of shoes.

The rehabilitation division, the duty of which is to make sick soldiers forget their pains as quickly as possible through the playing of games and other diversions at the base hospital, has saved so much time in fitting convalescents for duty, according to Col. J. H. Allen, division surgeon here, that Surgeon General Gorgas has ordered similar departments organized in other cantonments throughout the country.

Since the rehabilitation division was started here in May it is estimated that 230 men have been sent back to duty from seven days to two weeks ahead of regular hospital schedule. Camp Sherman was the first of any of the cantonments to inaugurate a method of fitting convalescents for duty by having them exercise and play games.

Charles I. Freeman, base hospital Y. M. C. A. secretry, assists Capt. Merwin, commanding officer of the unique division. Freeman formerly was director of sports at West Tech high school, Cleveland. There are from 100 to 150 men constantly under the care of the division.

Robert A. Doan, Nelsonville, O., recently became the general Y. M. C. A. secretary at Camp Sherman. He was led to Army "Y" work through the enlistment of his son. He succeeded David A. Teachout, of Cleveland, who went to Chicago to become religious director for the central department Y. M. C. A. For six months before coming to Camp Sherman Mr. Doan was "Y" secretary at Fort Thomas, Ky., where his son had enlisted.

Fort Wayne News Sentinel (Fort Wayne, Indiana) September 12th 1918

© Newsbank

Strange cloud of vapour

Trenton State Gazette

October 13th 1881 © Newsbank

A Strange Cloud of Vapor.

About a month ago a remarkable phenomenon was observed near the village of San Jose Papalvapam, Vera Cruz, Mexico. Two days after a violent thunderstorm and incessant raining, what seemed to be an immense cloud rising out of the ground was observed. Little attention was paid to the phenomenon, as many of the peasants interpreted it to be the smoke of large quantities of wood that were burned into charcoal. An Indian, going to his maize field, situated on a hill, discovered that the vapor issued out of his field. His attempt to approach the column was thwarted by the extreme heat of the vapor. The extension of the column was some thirty square yards, and the vapor issued at intervals of five minutes. The smoke was so dense that the eye could not see the trees on the other side of the column. The maize field was completely burned, and as the vapor came out on other spots covered with trees, the leaves were burned and the trunks became black. The vapor column proceeded in the direction from east to west, between the volcanoes of Tuxtla and that of Orizaba. The phenomenon lasted nearly seven days, and is interpreted as an underground fire communicating with the volcanoes of Orizaba and that of Tuxtla.

Some Monster Toad Stories

Richard Muirhead

The image on the front cover of this issue of Flying Snake shows what is almost certainly a large Cane Toad carrying a young one on its back. According to Animal Records by Mark Carwardine (Natural History Museum, London, 2010.) " The largest toad ever recorded was a cane toad. Weighing an incredible 2.65 kg (5lb 13 1/2 ounces), it measured over half metre long at 53.9 cm (21 1/4 in) fully extended. " By now this record may have been superseded.

A MONSTER toad, weighing nearly sixty-six pounds and measuring nearly three feet round the body, is said to have been found at Juillac, France, and sold for three hundred and fifty dollars to a manufacturer at St. Etienne. Its croaking bears a close resemblance to the barking of a dog. The inhabitants of all the country round have been pouring into Juillac to see the phenomenal animal.

Repository (Ohio) May 12th 1888 © Newsbank

Juillac is a commune in central France

Massive Toad in Gloucestershire Castle

The following information about a giant toad which inhabited the dungeon of Berkeley Castle around the time of the reign of King Henry VII (1457 - 1509) is on pages 29 – 30 of `Ghosts and Witches of the Cotswolds` by J.A.Brooks.

“ To my mind there are few places in England with a more sinister aura than Berkeley Castle. Most probably this feeling derives from the hideous death suffered in the dungeons by Edward II (he was slowly disembowelled in the most revolting way possible as he was homosexual the manner of his execution probably appealed to the coarse sense of humour of his medieval torturers). The Castle must have a hoard of spectacular ghosts, but if it does I have failed to find them. However , the following remarkable discovery, also from the account by John Smyth, goes a little way to making up for this deficiency. The descript

Berkeley Castle Wikipedia Creative Commons

- ion of the dungeon is very similar to the one shown to visitors as being the scene of the murder of King Edward."

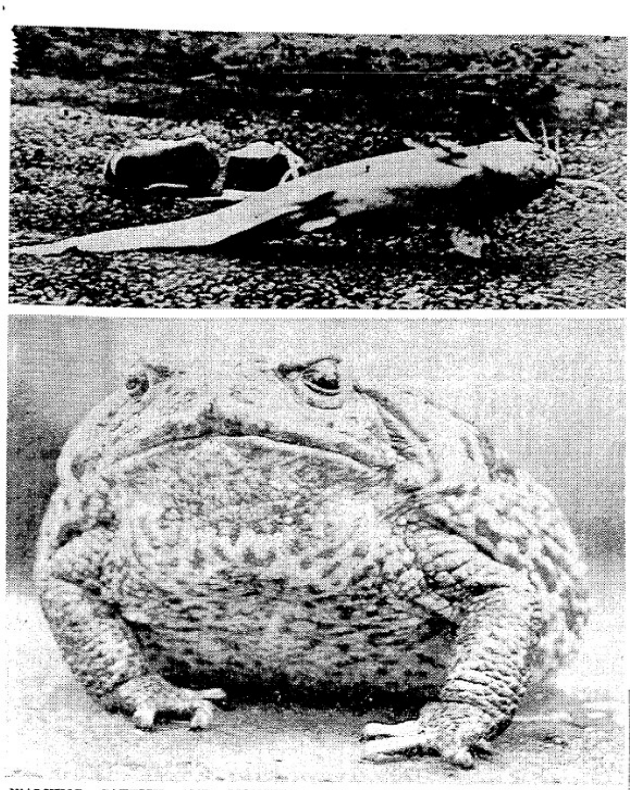
"Out of which dungeon in the likenes of a deepe broade

well goinge steeply down in the midst of the Dungeon Chamber in the said Keepe, was (as tradition tells) drawne Forth a Toad, in the time of Kinge Henry the seventh, of an incredible bignes, which, in the deepe dry dust in the bottom thereof, had doubtlesse lived there divers hundreds of yeares; whose portraiture in just dimension, as it was to me affirmed by divers aged persons, I sawe, about 48 years agone, drawne in colours upon the Doore of the Great Hall, and of the utter side of the stone porch leading into that hall; since , by pargettors or pointers of that wall washed out or outworne with time; which in bredth was more than a foot, neere sixteen inches, and in length more. Of which monstrous and outgrown beast the inhabitants of this towne, and in the neighbour villages round about, fable many strange and incredible wonders; making the greatnes of this toad more than would fill a peck, yea. I have heard some, who looked to have beleife, say from the reports of their Fathers and Grandfathers that it would have filled a bushel or strike, and to have beene many yeares fed with flesh and garbage from the butchers; but this is all the truth I knowe or dare believe."

Monster toad at Niagra Falls

Just a small snippet here, from A History of N.Greening and Sons, Ltd, of Warrington, England from 1799 to 1949 by Stuart P.B.Mais page 19.:

" He has got a monster toad which he picked up right under the great Horse Shoe Falls of Niagra amidst a roar of waters which does not exist on the earth besides." I do not who "He" was.



Monster Toad and strange fish - Florida

Above: Mobile Register September 21st 1971 © Newsbank

Toads persecuting man

Muirhead`s Mysteries blog April 18th 2018

Dear folks,

I am not being racist or toad-ist here , this really is a story of some highly dangerous toads in south-west Wales which I found in Tony Roberts` `Myths and Legends of Pembrokeshire` (Abercastle Publications, 2016)

The Toads of Trellyffant

" A curious story is told of the farm called Trellyffant near Nevern. If you drive (?) on the coast road from Newport to Moylegrove for about 4 miles, the farm lies down to the right and there is a fine prehistoric burial chamber in a field just visible from the road.

But the story, told by Giraldus Cambrensis (1146 - 1223 - Rich) relates how a young man Cecil Longlegs during a severe illness, suffered as violent a persecution from toads, as if the reptiles (sic) of the whole province had come to him by agreement; and though destroyed by his nurses and friends, they increased again on all sides in infinite numbers, like hydras heads. His attendants both friends and strangers, being wearied out, he was drawn up in a kind of bag into a high tree, stripped of its leaves; nor was he there secure from his venomous (sic) enemies, for they crept up the tree in great numbers and consumed him to the very bones."

Giant Toads in Lower Umlazi River area South Africa

Sketches of Life and Sport in South-Eastern Africa

Charles E.Hamilton & Frederick G.H.Price, Pierre Méjanel

1870 page 119

"In this locality toads and frogs are of an unusually large size; these reptiles (sic - R) like the frogs in the South of France, but without their excuse for it, made one continuous , uneuphonious chorus; so loud was it we could scarcely hear ourselves speak. Some of these toads , particularly one kind, called the monster-toad, are of a deadly poisonous nature. Horses will shy at them as they do at a wild beast or snake; and if I could quite believe in their instinct in this matter , I should regard them as invaluable , and hope to train them some day to distinguish mushrooms from fungi."

Poison of the African Toad

The New Hampshire Journal of Medicine

Volumes 7 – 8 1857 page 94

"The Rev Francis Flaming`s recent work on Southern Africa , has the following in relation to reptiles of that region. There is a monster toad there which has more terrifying celebrity than the puff-adder.it is about a foot long and eight inches broad, with a spotted green back, yellow belly and large red eyes which the Kaffirs say spirt fire. All animals, As well as man, abhor this loathsome and most shocking looking creature…"

(Could this be the same creature as in the case from 1870 above?)

Huge toad in a pond in a Berkshire in 1806

Sorry about the tilt in the extract below!

Thanks to **Bob Skinner**.

Belfast Commercial Chronicle June 7th 1806

The following singular and fatal occurrence is said to have taken place a few days ago :—On the evening of Friday se'nnight, three drovers, a father, and his two sons, called at the house of a farmer, not far from the village of Filfield, in Berkshire, for the purpose of taking some of his cattle to London. Here they partook of some refreshment, which chiefly consisted of duck-eggs; very soon after they were seized with a violent illness, were put to bed, and died before the next morning. The apothecary of the adjoining village, who was sent for (but too late to save them) made inquiry as to the food they had eaten, and on finding that they had eat duck-eggs, he immediately gave directions that the pond to which the farmer's ducks resorted should be searched: this was done, and a toad, of the enormous weight of seven pounds, was found at the bottom of the pond. Some more of the duck-eggs that had not been used were examined, and black spots were observed inside the yolk; and one of the eggs was given to a dog, which caused its death in a very short time. The eggs must have been impregnated by the spawn of the toad. How it happened, we will leave to naturalists to determine.

1517: The first alien big cat? The *"Lion of Valencia"*

Javier Resines

All fans of zoological anomalies know that the phenomenon of the alien big cat is especially important in Great Britain, both by the number of cases and by the many studies that have been made on encounters with these strange felines. However, other countries also have their particular history of impossible apparitions of Panthers or phantom Lions, some of them from very ancient times. On this occasion, we set our sights on Spain…

The first case of a possible alien big cat of which we have documented evidence in Spain goes back five centuries ago, specifically as of September 27, 1517. On that day, a severe storm fell on the city of Valencia, located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea with at that time a population of about 50,000 inhabitants. In the middle of the terrible downpour many neighbours saw a strange animal – described as being similar to a lion – walking through the streets, roaring and threatening anyone it found in its way.

To know the history of the so- called Lion of Valencia, we have the documented support of two fundamental works. The first one we owe to the Catalan researcher Fontana Tarrats. In his documentary compilations dedicated to meteorological incidents in what today are the autonomous communities of Catalonia, Valencia and Murcia, he tells us in relation to the Valencian flood of 1517, that the rain had already begun forty days before the overflow of the river Turia, the river that crosses the city.

At 4 p.m. on the 27th, the waters flooded almost every neighbourhood of Valencia, in addition to its bridges, and many houses in the city collapsed . For example, in the central street of Murviedro in which sixty buildings disappeared, the second bibliographical

source tells us what happened on that date. The source is: «Second part of the first decade of the history of the Illustrious and crowned city and Region of Valencia», Written by the priest of the parish of San Esteban, Gaspar Joan Escolano, in 1611:

“In the year one thousand five hundred and ten and seven, it rained in Valencia for about forty continuous days, which seemed a picture of the Flood of Noah, and a hundred houses collapsed, among them that of the curate of the parish of St. Stephen, which took him underwater , together with the sacristan who served him. " Thus Escolano narrated the consequences of the flood of that 27 September.in the district of the Tanners; and no less did this tragedy increase the cries of other citizens, who awaiting help from others , pierced the sky asking God for mercy according to the chronicler.

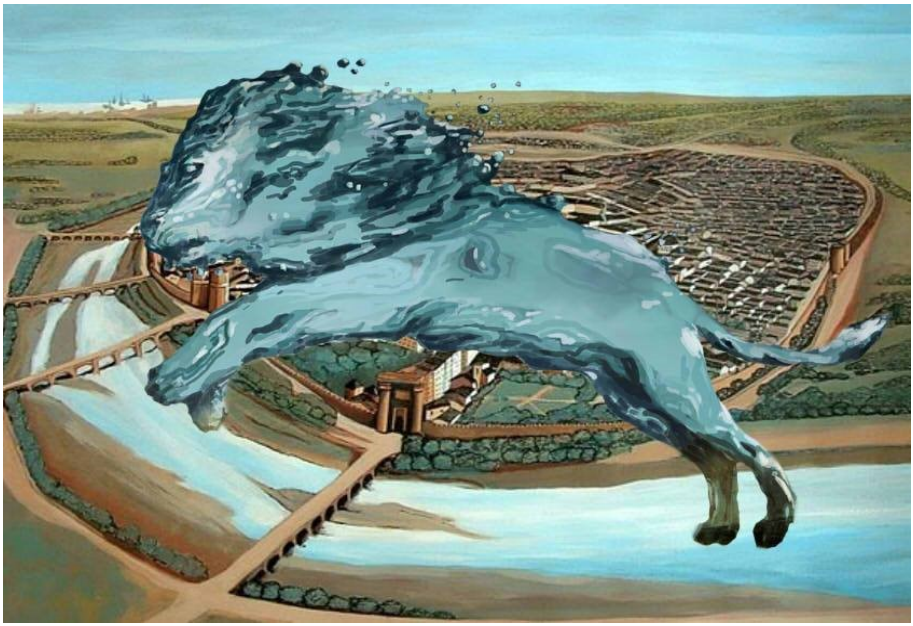


Fig 1 Idealized representation of the Lion of Valencia".

Fig 2. Medievel depiction of a lion

1447 Libro decimo 1448

CAPITVLO III. DE

Fig 3. A facsimile photograph of the book of Escolano,

The next morning, once the storm was over, calm did not reach the capital of the Turia: A flood swept through the city leaving several hundred dead in its path. While the survivors tried to return to normal, the strange lion continued to rest at its ease. Such dread had spread through the locality that when it was dark, no one dared to leave their homes for fear of the beast.

Escolano collects in his work the following description on what he calls the Lion of Germania:

"To this calamity of the flood, was added in Valencia another no less frightful, and it was during that night of the flood (or the following night, according to the memories of that time), that a lion was seen to walk bellowing through the streets, which enhanced the horror in the hearts of the miserable Iudadanos. At first it was understood that some of the ordinary lions in the Royal Palace had been released. For they had scarcely seen him in a street, when it became invisible, and they felt it cry far away, where it appeared again; And at this sound in an instant it was shown to be in a different place and when it rushed, it vanished: and as they heard it loudly with astonishment those who had seen it said to those who had not, "that they had lost their mind, and their heart thus losing their courage, so that they fancied lions in the shadows." But those who had really seen the lion were furious with the unbelievers, and came to blows about it. I have always believed that it was the Angel Messenger, Commissioner of the Justice of God, but however it was named the Lion of Germania." In the story that has survived we can distinguish some of the typical features of encounters with alien big cats: The sudden appearance and disappearance of the creatures, the ability for them to be in several places at the same time, its abnormal physical characteristics... The description that is made of the creature varies according to the witnesses. For some, it resembles a lion of great dimensions. In the opinion of others, it is more like an ox that emits powerful roars. The truth is that it was a real large animal, and one that no one had ever seen prowling around the área before.

A theory that was weighed at the time was that the dreaded lion was-in fact-an animal that had escaped from the Royal Palace. Since the 11th century, this place was the residence of the King`s and had an important collection of exotic animals: lions, bears, deer, pheasants, peacocks,... However, the flood did not affect the building and did not affect any of the specimens that were kept in the small zoo, so this hypothesis is ruled out.

For three long months, the Valencian authorities ordered the city's deserted streets to be patrolled in the hope of capturing the beast. The search was unsuccessful, something habitual in cases of strange felines. However, the torn trees, the dead animals in their path and the dung of the beast were sufficient reason to not doubt its existence and ferocity. The chronicles of the time tell that, in this situation, many women became frightened and went crazy.

The huge lion was last seen by several people who claimed that they had met it near the convent of the Trinity, in the area of the suburb of Sant Guillem, heading towards the bridge of the same name.

When the marshals came to the scene, the witnesses claimed to see the animal throw itself into the water, disappearing forever. Since then, this lion (or whatever) was never heard from again and the city of Valencia regained calm again little by little.

This story may be the first documented case of an alien big cat in history. Strange animals are not just a contemporary phenomenon. Since chronicles began to be written by man, the presence of impossible beasts has always been with us, making our world a little more mysterious

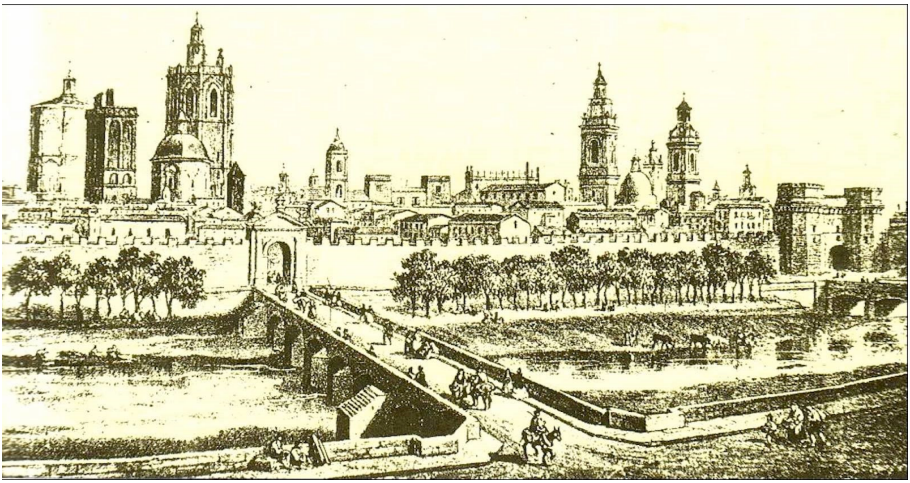


Fig 4 Puente de la Trinidad, in Valencia

Unknown water spider in Uganda

Richard Muirhead and Carl Marshall

In mid March 2018 I bought an interesting looking book in Buxton called `African Notebook` by Norman E. Hickin (The Scientific Book Club, 1969) within which is an account of the author`s natural history expeditions in East Africa, including Uganda. On pages 133 - 134 Hickin recounts his sighting of what appeared to be a giant water spider but even he seems to be so overwhelmed by the sighting he begins to doubt his own eye-sight or sanity! Hickin was the author of several books on natural history and insect pests. Here is a partial account of his sighting, but shortened due to its length. At the time Hickin was in the vicinity of Lake Victoria near the Ripon Falls which a short time before had been destroyed by the construction of the Owen Falls Dam also known as the Nalubaale Power Station.

Carl Marshall my friend and Co - Editor of Flying Snake added the following information in an e - mail to me, below, on March 18th 2018.

"Please find enclosed two illustrations of a Red Baboon Tarantula also commonly known as Swimming Tarantulas of the Hysterocrates genus. I kept this species (H. gigas) for some time at Stratford upon Avon Butterfly Farm. I'm not suggesting this exact species is responsible for the African report you related over the phone but an undescribed species of this genus would probably fit the bill quite nicely. This species has short dense setae on the underside of its abdomen that holds oxygenated bubbles close to the ventral opening that leads directly into the tarantula's book lungs, thus enabling this species to breath underwater for many hours at a time via diffusion. One time I saw this particular individual dive down to the bottom of its enclosure and remain there for at least eight hours without resurfacing!
I hope this helps you out mate and is of interest."

Best wishes Carl

Usually known as a Cameroon Red Baboon Tarantula but occasionally more aptly referred to as the Swimming Spider.

It`s actually rather difficult to make out the spider in the photos as it`s so well camouflaged but trust me, it`s there! - Dr Devo.

Fig 1. Hysterocrates gigas. © Carl Marshall

Fig 2. The same spider from a different angle. © Carl Marshall

The Magic Zoo of Lake Lugano

Ulrich Magin

Lake Lugano, today a beautiful tourist attraction - a rather small, long lake with many arms, ringed by steep Alpine mountainsides, was a dangerous place to be in bygone days. Earlier writers knew a lot of rather legendary sounding animal stories which may be relevant to tales about lake monsters, eel balls, and hoop snakes.

In the first half of the 19th century, Lake Lugano was very much feared for its poisonous vipers. Mysterious things were reported about them, but these were soon sanitized in later accounts to sound more credible. The earlier report that I have found quotes from the third volume of Friedrich von Matthisson`s " Erinnerungen", which appeared in 5 volumes from 1810 1816. (1) Matthisson, a German poet and prose author (1761 - 1831), related a tale about Monte San Salvadore, a 912 m (ca. 3000 ft.) mountain overlooking the city, which was often quoted in natural science books:
" These vipers of the Salvador mountain are said, after the account of von Matthisson, to swim through Lake Lugano in mighty columns when it gets warm in spring to dwell in cool forests of the opposite bank until late autumn, when they return to their winter quarters. However, I find it more likely that in this case, grass snakes were mistakenly assumed to be vipers, as these never voluntarily enter into water." (2)

What a mighty sight these columns of snakes must have been - and strangely enough , Lake Lugano is the only Upper Italian lake without any real monster tradition (apart from some 20th century hoaxes claiming to be dated to the 19th century). Matthisson`s report, elaborated with additional information from the magazine " Der Wanderer" (The Hiker), becomes a real drama in 1815:

“ The migratory snakes. […] The mountain Salvador at Lake Lugano, so famous because of its sheer wildness and its magnificent views, harbours in its stony debris on its southern flank an incredible mass of vipers, which increase in numbers from year to year. […] They are of a brown colour, with a black stripe along their back, and often reach a length of a foot.[…] At the foot of the mountain lies an old country chalet whose inhabitants were driven out not by pestilence or war, nor by the poltergeist, but by the vipers which here are found in abundance. […] - These dangerous inhabitants of the Salvador start to migrate when summer begins to be warm. They swim across Lake Lugano in mighty columns to the cool forests at the opposite bank. In this forest (larger than a square mile) they live during the summer. No human foot may pass there without the greatest danger. Only in winter may one go there as the vipers have returned to their haunts on the famous Salvador across the lake. Here, at the Salvador, the snakes suddenly form balls. They coil and roll themselves into each other until they form the most curious wads which resemble, as their heads stick out, the bud of a thistle or the horrible head of the Medusa. These horrible, mobile balls are full of snake`s heads. (Exactly such a snake-ball was observed by the editor of the magazine “ Wanderer “ on 16 November 1808 when he was at the Lugano side of the mountain, in the company of six persons, among which the town medic of Lugano served as guide.) The lake here is over an hour wide, and they cross it twice a year in such enormous numbers that they push each other high above the surface of the water. During these days of their migration, no boat risks going to the lake. The school of snakes going over the lake cannot be penetrated. Old or sick snakes remain at shore and die, or else find death in the lake when they venture out.

”It is reported that there have been many schemes how to get rid of this pest, which never came into fruition, but that recently the idea was approved of felling the whole forest when the snakes were on the other side, then to light the logs and burn the creatures after their return.” (3)

Vipers, adders and grass snakes - in 1836, the horrible creatures were identified as *Vipera redi,* "the most common form of snake in France, Italy, Switzerland and southern Germany." Harald Othmar Lenz, the author of a natural history book, mentions that they form balls and swim across the lake in mighty columns, but sounds far more sober than the earlier story (4) and ten years later, we learn that these snakes are of the species *Coluber Aspis* and swim the lake between their summer and winter quarters - no mention of snake balls here, or of mighty columns which the fishermen nervously avoid. (5)

I am a keen reader of books on the Upper Italian lakes, and have not come across such a tale later than 1850. Either the scheme to burn all snakes was successful, or the mass migration does no longer take place, as I have yet to come across a guidebook to the region that warns hikers to be aware of rolling, attacking snake balls. I am reminded, however, of Pliny`s claim that the eels in nearby Lake Garda roll into big balls each October, and then are tossed around by the waves.(6).

Is there a concept, ascribed to various species in different lakes that elongated creatures at a certain times form balls? Ichthyologists assume that eels do that from time to time , but here we find the same idea applied to a land dwelling (however, aquatic migratory) snake which moves in this way! Is this concept one that is one of the sources of the American stories about hoop-snakes? Or, more ancient still, is this what Olaus Magnus actually had in mind when he wrote that the monster of Lake Mjösa in Norway coils itself into a sphere - a quote that each cryptozoologist has interpreted in his or her own terms?

Can one get any more difference than that between wild vipers and take fish?

TAMING FISHES. The problem as to whether fishes may be tamed in a state of liberty has just been solved by a Swiss physician , Dr R.Fastenrath of Herisau.

“At the lake of Lugano he would sit down, near the shore, with only his head emerging from the water, for fully an hour, resting his hands on his knees and keeping in each of them a large piece of bread which, was soaked thoroughly by the water. Some members pf the very youngest broods finally came near him and picked up some of the bread, but immediately made a hurried flight. As days went on, however, they became more confident, and the older members of the fish family by and by followed their example, until all the fishes swarmed freely around the doctor, undisturbed by his motions, enjoying the meal offered by him. At last he could even stroke and handle them or splash violently in the water, without in the least disturbing the fishes.” (7)

This news story met with instant interest all over the world (although one can hardly imagine now why tame fish should be such a sensation.) It was printed in more than a dozen New Zealand newspapers, for example, from which we can piece together that the species of fish involved was loaches (8), and that “ Dr Fastenrath let down a white screen into the water, and with the aid of a special camera took some striking photographs of his finny friends.” (9) Whether you regard fish which don`t swim away as fascinating or boring - I just couldn`t even trace the professor I have only identified a Rudolf Fastenrath, of Herisau, a Swiss local poet who wrote a book in dialect which was publish - ed at Lake Lugano…(10) Therefore, the tame fish, vastly more credible actually than snakes that form balls to move, are as elusive as the former.

Notes

1.Friedrich von Matthisson : *Erinnerungen,* 5 Bände, Orell Füssli & Co., Zurich 1810 - 1816

2. Johann Rudolf Steinmüller: *Neue Alpina.Eine Schrift der Schweizerischen Naturgeschte, Alpen - und Landwirtschaft gewiedmet.* Steiner, Winterthur 1821, vol. 1, p. 176 - 177

3. *Jurende`s vaterländdischer Pilger im Kaiserstaate Oesterreichs: Ein Nationalkalender für alle Provinzen d.Oesterreichischen Gesammtreiches: allen Freunden der Kultur aus dem Lehr - Wehr und Nährstande; vorzügl. Allen Natur - und Vaterlandsfreunden geweiht; als ein Versuch zur Verbesserung des Kalenderwesens.* Vol. 2, 1815,p.151

4.Harald Othmar Lenz: *Gemeinnützige Naturgeschichte,* vol. 3.Gotha, Beckersche Buchhandlung, 1836, p.33

5. Dierbach in: *Archiv der Pharmacie* 1846; p.36 - 48; quote on p.47

6. *Natural History* 9, 75. See also Gardiner,A. (1990): Eel Oddities. *Fortean Times* 56, Winter 1990, p.53

7. *Hawera & Normanby Star,* 29 May 1906, p.6

8. Taming Fishes. *New Zealand Tablet,* 16 November 1906, p. 29

9. Professor Tames Fish. *Hawera & Normanby Star,* 19 February 1906, p. 6. See also: *New Zealand Tablet,* 12 July 1906, p.35 (in both papers, second appearance of same story); *Otautau Standard and Wallace County Chronicle* 3 July 1906, *Poverty Bay Herald* 3 February 1906, and in the USA *Lundington Daily News* 2 May 1906. The last appearance of this special piece of news, as far as I know, was in the *Indiana Weekly Messenger* over 17 years later , on 15 November 1923.

10. Fastenrath, Rudolf: *Gruetz di Gott mi Appezell,* Magliaso, Ceresio, 1906

Lake Lugano. The original uploader was Civvi at Italian Wikipedia - Transferred from it.wikipedia to Commons.

Steller`s Sea Cow: An Update (well, sort of)

Richard George

I left you with an unconvincing (to me , at least) alleged sighting of SSC off the Pacific Northwest in 2010. Two years later, there appeared on You Tube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXqRvdbvkvE) the sensational headline:

STELLAR`S SEA COW REDISCOVERED OFF WEST GREENLAND

Posted, ostensibly, by Thorarinn Baldursson, the clip was about 15 seconds long, and presented several large indistinct bumps and lumps near a desolate grey coastline.

Accompanying this was a 2 minute 33 second trailer, Tales of a Sea Cow.. .Trailer. Oh dear.

Etienne de France is a film maker best known for mixing reality and fiction. You can look him up on Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etienne_de_France). *Tales of a Sea Cow* is a 59 minute fictional pseudo-documentary, whose central theme is that SSC perceives events in terms of rhythm via a " complicated code", and that this potentially revolutionary form of communication is under threat from human telecommunication systems. De France seems to have been inspired here by the songs of humpback whales.

All very interesting and bien pensant, but not very zoological. Critic Annick Buread called it " A tongue-in-cheek joyous but unsettling fable."

Actually, there seems to me no reason SSC shouldn`t live in the Davis Strait off West Greenland: it`s sparsely populated, and at roughly the same latitude as the Gulf of Anadyr where the last credible sighting was made in 1977. It would be interesting to study the local language, in case it has a term for a large sea creature that is not a cetacean or pinniped. Remember the word *tagua,* and how important it was to the discovery of the Chacoan Peccary.

In fact Bret Weinstein and James Patton of the University of California have been investigating " vague reports" of SSC or something similar off Greenland . But Etienne de France`s activities force us up against the whole question of fake news. Should we believe the Cape Navarin (1962) and Anapkinskaya Bay (1976) accounts at all? Was SSC a propaganda tool during the Cold War, in a region so strategically sensitive most Soviet citizens were banned from entering it? We can tie ourselves in knots speculating. Aileen Orr, in a book called *Wojtek The Bear* (p.11f) , claims that cetaceans were used by by both the USSR and the US for security and espionage purposes. How might this relate to SSC?

To sum up, I`ve no new sightings to report, apart from a very shadowy claim online that a SSC skeleton (how old?) was found in 1983 on a Russian island (which?) But last month I found an interesting tome by Matthew A.Bille called *Shadows of Existence* (2006). In a list of recommended books towards the end (p.218) he includes John Hunt`s *A World Full of Animals* (1969), and says:

"Most intriguingly ,Hunt reported (without giving a source) that "Russian reports" indicated that not only was Steller`s Sea Cow alive, but that a surviving population was under official protection…"

Tantalising as ever...we`re back in Russian doll territory, with possibilities within possibilities.

The ”Baby of the Desert” an insect cryptid from Arizona

Richard Muirhead

I came across references to this cryptid in the pages of the online edition of The Desert Magazine, by which I mean back issues. The earliest reference was in the January 1947 edition, page 22 in a letter from a William M. Weldon:

Mystery of the Baby Face . . . South Pasadena, California

“Gentlemen: Would like to ask if there is such a thing as a very poisonous desert resident called "Baby of the Desert," so named because of the resemblance of its face to that of a human baby. Whether this so-called "Baby of the Desert" is supposed to be insect, reptile or rodent, I could not find out. I was told about it recently by a woman who was living near Phoenix several years ago, where she heard about it, but she admitted she had never seen one. I asked her if she was talking about the Gila Monster and she said no, that it was considerably smaller than the Gila Monster. For my part, I have never heard of such a desert inhabitant and would like to know if there is such a thing.” WILLIAM M. WELDON

Friend Weldon: The question of the Baby of the Desert, Baby-face, or Nino de la Tierra, as it is variously called, came up for discussion on the Letters page of the magazine two years ago. A reader sent in a description of the fearsome beast as it had been pictured to him and asked for confirmation from someone who had seen it. It was said to be a doll-like animal, about three or four inches in length, walking on all fours, with head and face like that of an infant. It was claimed to be more poisonous than a rattlesnake, but harmless unless molested. None of our readers would admit personal knowledge of such a creature. In fact, it appears that the Babyface is actually our old friend the yellow and black striped]erusalem cricket or Sand-cricket, who is nocturnal and usually found under boards or stones. April. 1944, Nature Magazine has an article and photo.

None of our readers would admit personal knowledge of such a creature. In fact, it appears that the Babyface is actually our old friend the yellow and black striped Jerusalem cricket or Sand-cricket, who is nocturnal and usually found under boards or stones. April. 1944, Nature Magazine has an article and photographs regarding him." - R.H.

Is this the "Baby-face" ?

Jerusalem Cricket. Wikipedia Commons.

The February 1947 issue of Desert Magazine had the following letter on p.18:

Bugs of the Desert . . . San Fernando, California

Dear Mr. Henderson: The mention of the desert insect, "Baby Face," on the Letters page of your January magazine, brought to mind the following incident and I wondered if there could be any connection.

“Some years ago while surveying on the Cascade ranch at the north-west corner of this valley, we uncovered what we first thought to be a Jerusalem Cricket. The coloring was the same and it was a little more than two inches long. Later in the day a ranch hand brought us a Jerusalem Cricket and then we noticed quite a difference in the bodies and heads of the two insects. The round face of the first one did attract our attention although we didn't think of a baby at the time. The ranch foreman placed them in different bottles to show them to a man in the Farm Bureau office who was versed in such things. He reported back that the first insect was called Vinegarones or Sun Spider and supposed to be harmless. At the ranch we were told that on the Mexican border there was a similar insect that is supposed to be poisonous. “S. G. CHAMBERLAIN

This letter appeared in the April 1947 edition of Desert Magazine page 31:

“Nino de la Tierra . . . South Laguna, California Dear Editor: I was interested in the recent letters about "Baby Face." This is not the Jerusalem cricket or potato bug, as many believe, but could De mistaken for one of these insects. Baby-face lives down Mexico way. When we were living in El Paso, one of the weird looking bugs was found under our house. It had a body of a large Tarantula, the head was white as a bleached bone and looked like a bald headed baby, a dreadful thing. I was told at the time that Mexicans consider them so poisonous, that if bitten on the finger by one, they chop off the finger. Baby-face or Nino de la tierra, child of the earth, is found near the Mexican border. “

COILA HARRIS

After this the trail of the Baby-face went cold. Any further information from readers would be greatly appreciated.

Lore of the Bear Lake Monster

David Weatherly

"All lakes, caves and dens have their legendary histories. Tradition loves to throw her magic wand over beautiful dells and lakes, and people them with fairies, giants, and monsters of various kinds. Bear Lake has also its own monster tale to tell, and when I have told it, I will leave you to judge whether or no its merits are merely traditionary."

Joe Rich, Deseret News

Bear Lake is a natural freshwater lake straddling the borders of Utah and Idaho. The lake is 109 square miles and is divided evenly between the two states. It`s a picturesque spot, sitting at an elevation of 5,924 feet. It`s known for its turquoise blue water that earned the lake its nickname , " Caribbean of the Rockies." The lake is over 250,000 years old and its water properties have led to the evolution of several unique species of fauna. With a maximum depth of about 208 feet, the lake is a popular spot for outdoor enthusiasts who come to enjoy boating, camping, hiking and other activities around the water.

It even has its own monster.

The creature is a hundred feet in length and resembles a serpent. Its body is light cream in color and it moves through the water faster than a locomotive. The head resembles that of a cow, or perhaps a walrus, and it has a voracious appetite. Maybe.

It may be that it`s only fifty feet long and resembles a snake with feet and the head of a crocodile or alligator. Even today, if you ask locals around Bear lake to describe the monster, you`ll receive a range of answers from a vague, Nessie like description, to a quiet chuckle and shake of the head.

The Bear lake monster has a long history, at least, stories of the monster have a long history. Accounts first began to appear in print in the late 1860`s. The earliest tales came from the pen of Joe Rich, a reporter for the *Deseret News*. Rich was a Mormon settler in the region and purportedly first heard about the water monster from the local Shoshone Indians.

The summer of 1868 brought the first big round of news about the monster with an article from Rich that stated:

"The Indians say there is a monster animal that lives in the Lake that has captured and carried away Indians while in the Lake swimming; but they say it has not been seen by them for many years, not since the buffalo inhabited the valley…"

The Deseret News continued to run stories about the creature while the *Salt Lake Tribune* took a sceptical view calling the monster the "twin brother to the devil and cousin to Brigham [Young]."

Sporadic interest in the monster continued into the 1880`s as the lore of the creature grew. According to a story in the August 27, 1881 edition of the *Ogden Herald*, a group of fishermen set about capturing the elusive beast. While the paper was careful to note that it couldn`t account for the "absolute correctness" of the story, it went on to tell the tale anyway. Under the headline " A Sucker for Sheep", the *Herald* reported that the group of would be monster hunters had slaughtered a sheep for use as bait in snagging the lake monster. Attaching a carcass to grappling hooks, to which they attached a long rope, they lowered the bait to the lake`s bottom and tied it off.

Apparently, they were confident enough in their method that they left he scene, expecting to return and find the monster hooked.

A group of local Native Americans had watched the entire procedure and were disgusted at the waste of good mutton. Once the fishermen were gone, they retrieved the sheep carcass and replaced it with what the paper calls "the largest of the sucker species they could find."

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Presumably the story was referring to a sucker fish, but one must wonder what other kind of suckers the paper had in mind publishing the tale.

Stories of the Bear Lake monster continued to morph into a curious blend of folklore, storytelling, parody and even politics. The Logan Journal for May 11,1883 defined Bear Lake Valley as " The Home of the Monster", and their story stated, " quite a number of people really believe there is a large being living there."

Even in the early days of the stories, some people speculated that the tales were simply designed to attention and interest to the area. As the reports continued, they seemed to become even stranger and the monster was reported with different appearances. A letter published in a Logan,UT newspaper in 1907 came from two men who claimed they`d had a frightening encounter with the beast when it came ashore an d killed one of their horses. The *Logan Republican* reported the story on September 18,1907 with a headline that read: " Bear Lake Monster appears. Leviathan comes from Lake and devours horse while men shoot at it."

The report gave yet another version of the lake monster`s appearance:

" The Bear Lake Monster, a combination of dragon, bear and fish and measuring twenty feet in length and possessing the roar of a lion is again agitating people over the mountains." Things got more bizarre with another story the Republican ran a few days later. A headline dated September 21st read: " Quil Nebeker sees monster."

"Quil Nebeker" was one Aquillla C.Nebeker, a well-known public figure who had served as President of the Senate of Utah and was once an acting governor of the state. One would expect such an important figure to stick strictly to the facts and only report something like a lake monster if he had little or no doubt as to what he had seen. Nebeker`s strange tale was a long, written account of his encounter with the purported monster. According to the politician, the creature came out of the water and quickly devoured eight of his sheep. Not satiated appare

-ntly, the creature also ate a stack of hay, eight of Nebeker`s pigs, and a dozen bales of barbed wire. The politician had a solution though:

" I noticed my large gramophone standing on the table ready for use. An inspiration struck me - I called to mind the value of music in taming the snakes and wild animals of the forest and I decided to try it."

Nebeker goes on to recount his meeting with the monster and the tune they played together, ending the tale with a statement on the so -called monster: "Now, boys, this is the straight of that "Bear Lake Monster" story, but don`t call him a "monster" any longer, for he truly is wondrously human."

Of course, Nebeker`s "wondrous" account, written in the style of the day, doesn`t provide us with any kind of evidence of the potential existence of a monster in Bear Lake. It`s rather unclear what point he was making unless he just wanted to have some fun. Nevertheless, rumors spread about a political figure spotting the creature and it all added to the mythos of the monster.

Sightings mostly filtered off with only occasional mentions in the ensuing years. A Boy Scout leader reported seeing the lake monster in 1946. A curious incident was reported by the Davis County Clipper in November 1976. According to the report, Bryce Nielson, a biologist with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Fisheries, watched a small group of elk swim across Bear Lake. The elk had become boxed in near the lake and chose to swim almost seven miles across the water. Locals stated that they had never seen such a performance. Nielson witnessed the elk again the following day, coming back across the water. As the news item stated: "Nielson mentioned that looking at the small herd of elk in the middle of the lake made him and other residents think about the legend of the Bear Lake Monster. Could it be that we have solved the mystery?"

Elk numbers in the Bear Lake region are small, so at least, the sighting was an unusual one. Their presence in the water was even more curious and not a sight that many people, even locals, were familiar with.

It wasn`t elk that Bear Lake business owner Brian Hirschi claimed he encountered in June 2002

Hirschi reports his encounter occurred on a summer night when he was anchoring his boat. After tossing the anchor, he spotted two humps in the water, about a hundred yards from his boat. His first thought was seeing lost water skis floating in the water, but they vanished from sight. Moments later, his boat was lifted up.“ I started to get scared. The next thing I know, a serpent-like creature shot up out of the water. It had really dark, slimy green skin and deep beet-red eyes.” Hirschi reports that the creature went back underwater, then he heard a sound like a “roaring bull.” The monster took off through the water and was gone. He took his time to report the incident, not wanting people to think he was “ crazy or on the lake too much”. But he finally decided to break his silence and recount the tale. After all, he says:
“Once you`ve seen the monster, you really don`t care what other people say.”

The statement seems to sum up much of the general attitude surrounding Bear Lake. The monster has been part of the region`s folklore for so long, that many people have no idea what`s genuine and what`s clever storytelling. A Bear Lake monster boat operated on the lake for years. Built to look like a green monster, the boat offered forty-five minute cruises on the lake, complete with storytellers who recounted tales of the lake`s legendary resident. The Bear Lake monster is a fascinating creature, a grand mix of folklore, fear and maybe a few facts. As Folklorist Elaine Thatcher noted in “Between Pulpit and Pew.” “My research in the Bear Lake Valley shows that the monster story has now evolved into self-parody, as locals play with the story, for themselves and for tourists.”

Bear Lake . Wikipedia Commons

https://www.flickr.com/
photos/84263554@N00/1143965838/

Mystery animal photo found on ebay

Richard Muirhead

I bought this black and white/sepia photo on ebay.co.uk in February 2018 from a Mr Darrin Stouffer of Covington , Washington, U.S.A. as I was intrigued by the animal and I couldn`t identify it. I thought it might be a photo of a pony or a camel taken from an unusual angle. I posted the image on the Zombie Mammal Society`s Facebook page and asked members what sort of animal they thought it was and got a few

suggestions. One person thought it may have been a llama, another a takin, one person noticed what he thought were horns. A young musk ox or young bison were also suggested.

Those Ever-Enigmatic Cetaceans.

Carl Marshall

Whales are a widely distributed and diverse group of fully aquatic, placental mammals. The order (Cetacea) are generally large (the largest in fact) that when surfacing, announce their presence in a explosive fashion by forcefully exhaling air through their blowhole[s]. This exhaled air is commonly referred to as the *Blow* and usually forms like a gusher or a stream of misty air or vapour. This dramatic behaviour coupled with the fact they are often gigantic makes whales a very conspicuous and easily observable species. Therefore it may be surprising to discover there are still many enigmas surrounding these giants of the abyss.

To begin with, until fairly recently, the Indopacific beaked whale *Indopacetus pacificus* was known only from two skulls washed up on beaches seventy three years apart and thousands of miles away. This mysterious species is quite likely to be one and the same as another rarely observed mystery cetacean known as Longman's beaked whale. There have been other possible sightings of Longman's beaked whale such as a report of two unidentified off-grey whales observed near the Seychelles in 1980, but no scientist was certain which ones (if any) referred to this extremely elusive enigma of the sea. Then on July 26th 2002, a very strange beaked whale became beached in Japan, but nobody initially gave much thought to it. The remains were photographed and then disposed of by burial. When a Cetologist finally saw the photographs he excitedly sought out to recover the remains as quickly as possible; then realising what he had found was the first intact example of Longman's beaked whale ever recovered.

The smallest beaked whale is the Peruvian,or Lesser,beaked whale. Zoologists had no idea of its existence until 1976, when a decaying skull was discovered on a beach in Peru by Dr James Mead, Curator of the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution.

Between 1975 and 1997, four beaked whales had become stranded on the California Coasts and were initially identified as Hector`s beaked whales *Mesoplodon hectori.* However, ecologist Dr Merel Dalebout analysed DNA samples taken from many mesoplodon specimens and found these four did not match *M. hectori.* The same was true of a fifth California specimen, which had previously been identified as Cuvier's beaked whale *Ziphius cavirostris.* In 2002, Dr Dalebout with four of her colleagues, published the discovery of *Mesoplodon perrini*.

In November 2003, a team of Biologists at Tokyo's *National Science Museum* and Shiro Wada of the *National Institute of Fisheries Science* made one of the most startling claims in whale ecology for many years. Scientists had long been divided over whether one of the smallest baleen whales, known as Bryde's whale *Balaenoptera brydei*, was a single species or two. The scientists reinforced even earlier claims by announcing that based on DNA evidence, Bryde's whale was indeed two separate species and according to studies of specimens taken by Japanese whalers in the 1970's, a third species may also have been missed entirely. Watch this space!

There are several observations on record of an unknown cetacean about the dimensions of a killer whale *Ornicus orca,* but with a strikingly different dorsal fin. The killer whale or orca, has an impressive sail-like dorsal fin which can be up to six feet high. The mystery whale has an equally high fin but is so narrow that observers compared it to a sword.

In 1841 Sir James Ross reported *" a line of large whales"* with *"remarkably long, pointed, black fins"* near Antarctica which seemed

to belong to an unknown species. This mysterious whale was sketched in 1902 by the famous naturalist Edward A.Wilson, who reported observing a group of four such whales. All the observers to this unknown animal were certain they were not seeing killer whales which are approximately the same size but whose striking patterning makes them instantly identifiable. Maybe what witnesses have been observing are actually melanistic orcas!

There are very likely many crypto cetaceans awaiting discovery, both undescribed species, unrecorded mutations, and unexpected hybrids; some of which have been recorded as being viably reproductive.

There is a mysterious whale, similar to a fin whale *Balaeonoptera* physalus but with lumps on its back instead of a dorsal fin, reported in the North Atlantic Ocean named the Scrag Whale. According to legend, the first whale observed by the white settlers of Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, encountered was a Scrag Whale that lingered in the harbour for three days in the 1960s. The settlers knew they had to try and capture it, but to accomplish this, a blacksmith had to fashion the islands first harpoon.

Also in the North Atlantic Ocean there is alleged to be the white-flippered beaked whale of unknown species. On a voyage to Jamaica in the 1840s, Philip H.Gosse`s ship was surrounded by a school of these whales for approximately seven hours.

Soon after Norway resumed commercial whale hunting in 1993 (following a brief moratorium) the country established a DNA registry to analyse whale kills and help that whale products come from legal sustainable sources. Geneticist Kevin Glover was recently analysing whale DNA when he came across a surprise. It showed a whale hunted in the northeastern Atlantic in 2007 had the genetic imprint of a hybrid, with an Antarctic minke mother. One of Glover`s colleagues then told him an interesting story relayed by a whaling vessel`s scientific officer nearly fifteen years before.

"He said there was a very strange looking individual taken back in 1996 - it didn`t have the white patch on its pectoral flippers like the [northern minke whales do] "said Glover ,of the Institute of Marine research in Bergen, Norway. "I wonder if it could be the same sort."

So Glover analysed the DNA of the 1996 whale captured in the North Atlantic and found it was a pure Antarctic whale. The sample had been overlooked because the DNA archive was in its infancy when the whale was captured. This Antarctic whale in the Arctic provided further evidence that Antarctic minkes can migrate to the home waters of northern relatives and, as the hybrid shows, even mate with them.

A Wholphin or wolphin is an extremely rare hybrid born from the mating of a female Bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* with a male False killer whale *Pseudorca crassidens* making them intergeneric hybrids; a rarity among mammalians. The first recorded wholphin was born in Tokyo SeaWorld but it died after two hundred days. Although they have been reported to exist in the wild, only one is currently in captivity, at *Sea Life Park in Hawaii.*

The 52-hertz whale is an individual whale of unidentified species, which calls at the very unusual frequency of 52Hz. This pitch is a much higher frequency than that of the other whale species with migratory patterns most closely resembling this whale's - the mighty blue whale (10-39 Hz) or fin whale (20 Hz). This mystery whale has been described as the "worlds loneliest whale". The calls have deepened slightly to around 49 Hertz since 1992 suggesting the whale has grown and matured.

There have been many hybrid Rorquals reported from the family Balaenopteridae. A short list is as follows:

Bowhead Whale *Balaena mysticetus* x North Pacific Right Whale *Eubalana japonica* photographed in the Bering Strait in 2009 Kelly et al. 2010.

Common Minke Whale *Balaena mysticetus* x North Pacific Right Whale *Eubalaena japonica* photographed in the Bering Strait in 2009 Kelly Et al. 2010.

Blue Whale *B.Musculus* x Fin Whale *B.physalus* these whales occur in mixed schools. Hybrids have been reported from both the northern Atlantic and the northern Pacific.

Grey Whale *Eschrichtius robustus x* Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae* No details. Waddell Et al. (2000, p. 317).

In 2014, DNA analysis showed the Clymene dolphin *Stenella clymene* to be a naturally occurring hybrid species descended from the Spinner dolphin *S.longirostris* and the Striped *dolphin S. coeruleoalba.* nationalgeographic.com

It is clear that there are still many mysteries to be solved regarding this enigmatic order, whether it be the discovery of new species, unexpected colour variants, the viability of hybrids, and maybe even hybrids formed by unsubscribed cetacean cryptids.

For my father John Marshall, a great taxidermist and naturalist who originally introduced me to natural history as a child. I am forever grateful!

References and Suggested Further Reading

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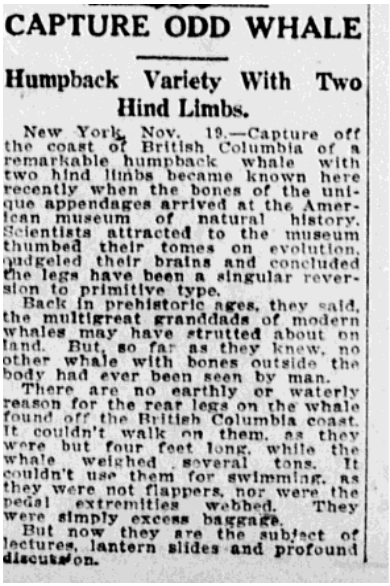
I found this story here below, it`s nothing to do with Carl`s article above, that is to say, I just wanted to fill in this space with something relevant.



CAPTURE ODD WHALE

Humpback Variety With Two Hind Limbs.

New York, Nov. 19.—Capture off the coast of British Columbia of a remarkable humpback whale with two hind limbs became known here recently when the bones of the unique appendages arrived at the American museum of natural history. Scientists attracted to the museum thumbed their tomes on evolution, pudgeled their brains and concluded the legs have been a singular reversion to primitive type.

Back in prehistoric ages, they said, the multigreat granddads of modern whales may have strutted about on land. But, so far as they knew, no other whale with bones outside the body had ever been seen by man.

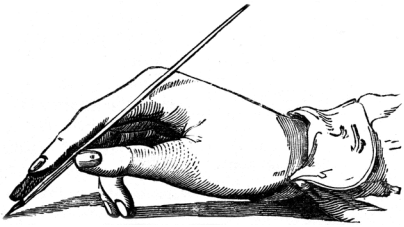
There are no earthly or waterly reason for the rear legs on the whale found off the British Columbia coast. It couldn't walk on them, as they were but four feet long, while the whale weighed several tons. It couldn't use them for swimming, as they were not flappers, nor were the pedal extremities webbed. They were simply excess baggage.

But now they are the subject of lectures, lantern slides and profound discussion.

State (S.Carolina)
November 23rd
1920

© Newsbank

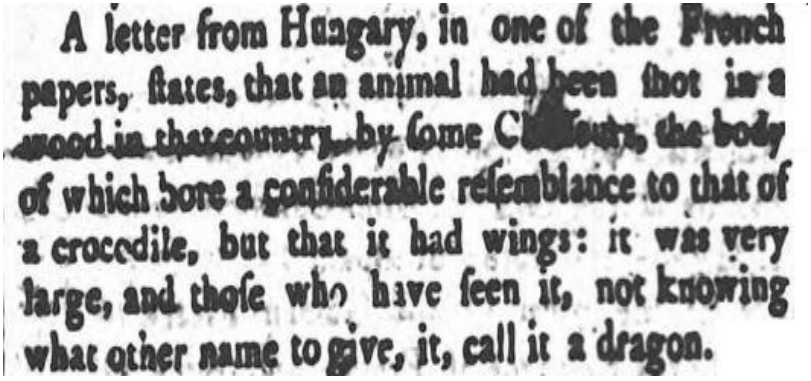
Notes and Queries



Below from Bob Skinner with thanks.

Living Dragon?

Hibernian 24th July 1805.



A letter from Hungary, in one of the French papers, ſtates, that an animal had been ſhot in a wood in that country, by ſome C[illegible]ſſacks, the body of which bore a conſiderable reſemblance to that of a crocodile, but that it had wings: it was very large, and thoſe who have ſeen it, not knowing what other name to give, it, call it a dragon.

Longest lasting Rainbow observed

This story appeared widely in the media on December 1st 2017. For example: " A rainbow appeared in the sky above Taipei for nine hours continually yesterday, claimed a meteorology expert. t's said to be the world's longest-lasting rainbow which was visible from 7am to 4pm in the capital of Taiwan.

The expert, who is a professor of Atmospheric Science, said the previous world record was six hours and it was observed in Sheffield, United Kingdom, in 1994.

He also explained that the rainbow yesterday lasted for such a long time because monsoon was affecting northern Taiwan...The previous longest rainbow was at Sheffield, U.K on March 14th 1994 , for six hours. (1)

1. Daily Mail online http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5136403/Longest-lasting-rainbow-appears-Taiwan-NINE-HOURS.html

A friend who was born and brought up in Madeira told me about some local folklore that presented the belief that either end of the rainbow, where it meets the ground, could suck up a victim like a whirl wind!

Wolves back in Germany

"The eagle soars above the clouds
The deer ran in the hills
And I may walk in cities
Where the wolf once had his fill."

Big Country Eiledon

news@thelocal.de@thelocalgermany

April 19th 2018

" Wolf numbers are increasing in Germany , and with it the chance of danger."

"After over a century and a half of extinction, wolves are back in Germany and multiplying quickly. But who exactly is affected by this growth and does it pose a threat to humans?"

"Why are we talking about wolves? For about 150 years the wolf was considered virtually extinct in Germany. Now they are back in several federal states, especially Lower Saxony and East Germany. Estimates made by the Federal Documentation and Advice Centre on the Wolf (DBBW) state that in 2017 there were roughly 800 in Germany , of which 150 to 160 were adult animals. "

These 800 beasts were comprised of roughly 60 packs, 15 pairs and 3 lone wolves…"

First wolf in Belgium for over 100 years

First wolf in a century sighted in Belgium

Daily Telegraph January 16th 2018

" The wild wolf has returned for the first time in more than a century to Belgium, the latest country in Europe to report a sighting of the resurgent species. The animal, which was wearing an electronic tracker, was detected in the northern region of Flanders this month. The tracker showed the wolf had travelled from Germany via Holland, where it was spotted around Christmas, and had covered about 310 miles in 10 days.

Wolves disappeared from most of western Europe from the beginning of the 20th century because of hunting , growing cities and industrialisation but are now recolonising the continent. " Our country was the only one in continental Europe to have not been visited by a wolf," said Landschap, a Belgian environmental group. Since the Bern Convention in 1979, wolves have been rehabilitated from scourge of farmers and public menace to a protected species.

Campaigners called on the Belgian government to adopt a strategy to encourage the return of the wolf."

Ancient Greek Statue found buried near New York

The Washington Post

July 21st 1922

STATUE, 2,000 YEARS OLD , IS DUG UP AT YONKERS

Pure Greek Work of Master was buried under water main at least 30 years

Yonkers, N.Y. July 20 (By the Associated Press). “Buried 3 feet below a water main which had not been disturbed since it was laid 38 years ago, workmen have found a statue, declared to be “ pure Greek”, and 2,000 years old, “at Graystone, Samuel Untermyer`s country place.

Isidore Kopti, sculptor, after a careful examination today declared that, in his opinion, the work not only was real Greek, but it was too good to have been done by any but a real master. The statue is of a woman, and stands about 4 feet 6 inches without the head, which had been broken off. “

Greek coin found in dress

Daily Nonpareil November 21st 1963

LOUISVILLE Ky “Mrs Wilson Beatty is still wondering how a Greek coin found its way into the hem of a tightly stitched dress. After the dress was dry - cleaned once , she noticed an unusual weight, investigated. There was no tear anywhere and discovered the coin, in the garment.

The coin was a 10 drachma, worth about 3 1/2 cents in U.S. money. “

Bay City Times

April 27th 1908

© Newsbank

EDUCATED HENS

TWO HENS HAVE LAID SIMILAR FREAK EGGS.

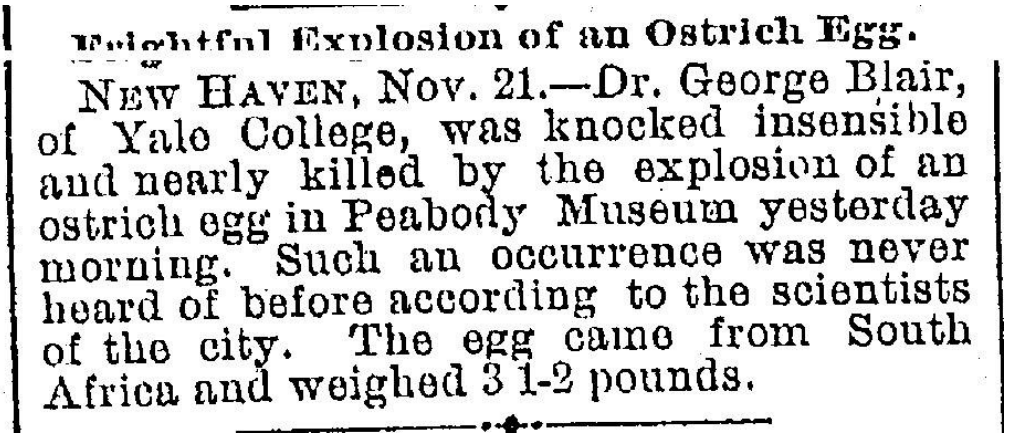
Both Eggs Had Clock Dials Imprinted on Flat Side of Shell.

Whether Bay City hens are more educated than hens raised in other localities is not definitely known but it has been established that as far as peculiarity of habits is concerned at least two Bay City hens have demonstrated that they are either out of the ordinary class of hens by reason of superior knowledge or else they are freaks of the first order.

William DeCourcey, 406 South Kiesel street, declares he is the possessor of an educated hen. He has a flock of 14 hens of various breeds. When gathering the eggs one day last week he was attracted by the peculiar shape of one of eight eggs in a nest. Examination revealed the fact that it was perhaps the most peculiar egg discovered in some time. On one side which was flat, the dial of a clock was imprinted in a plain manner above which was imprinted the word "onion" or "union," the first letter being a trifle indistinct so that it might be either word. The hours are spaced regularly and are twelve in number. The characters are part Roman and part numerals, but are not consecutive. The egg was boiled for preservation and is now reposing in a box packed wth cotton and can be seen by anyone who doubts this story. The egg was seen by a Times reporter who will vouch for its genuineness.

The most peculiar incident relative to the peculiar egg is that on April 8 Austin Smith, 1201 Fourth street, discovered an egg of the same peculiar formation, with a watch dial imprinted on a flat side of the egg. The story was printed in The Times on April 9, but it is not known that the hen owned by Mr. DeCourcey saw the article and thus got the idea.

Exploding Ostrich Egg



Frightful Explosion of an Ostrich Egg.

NEW HAVEN, Nov. 21.—Dr. George Blair, of Yale College, was knocked insensible and nearly killed by the explosion of an ostrich egg in Peabody Museum yesterday morning. Such an occurrence was never heard of before according to the scientists of the city. The egg came from South Africa and weighed 3 1-2 pounds.

Patriot. Harrisburg Pennsylvania

November 22nd 1886 © Newsbank

Manx cat or Opossum in Ireland?

Limerick Life (1) August 2017

Weird and Wonderful Tales

"Sometimes the truth was stranger than fiction in the Limerick countryside. As was the case on 16 May 1931, when a strange animal - about the size of a rat - was discovered in Abbeyfeale. It was first noticed at the back of a drapers shop and an attempt was made to capture the creature . The animal escaped up a tree where it was dislodged and fell to the street. Unfortunately once it was on the ground it was attacked by a blue terrier. The dog was the stronger of the two

creatures and the other animal was killed. An inquest was held to try and identify the animal but this was made more difficult as a portion of its tail was missing. Later it was discovered that an opossum had escaped from Mr Duffy`s Circus two weeks earlier and the night before its demise it had been chased from the bedroom of an Abbeyfeale resident who thought it was a Manx cat. (1)

Possible Steller`s Sea Cow sighting near Svalbard near the Arctic in 2016

Thanks to **Lars Thomas**

Danish cryptozoologist Lars Thomas passed on the following story to me in mid-April 2018 via Facebook in response to a query from me relating to modern sightings of the Steller`s Sea Cow:

“There`s been one possible sighting south of Svalbard (south of the Arctic - Dr Devo.) in 2016, but the description is very vague (i.e. broad brownish back, seemed very rough, but seen from a fairly large distance and only for a few seconds) And that is of course walrus waters. The informant though was sure it “ moved differently and much slower than walrus and was considerably bigger although he had nothing to compare it to.”

1. http://www.limerickcity.ie/media/wm038.pdf

Cheyenne State Leader

August 30th 1919

© Newsbank

Double-headed snake

Two-headed Snake Found by Kentucky Farmer.

CITY VISITED BY MANY ODD MOTHS

Dr. George Potts Called Upon by Many People to Explain Identity of Lunar Fliers

Harrisburg these days is entertaining hundreds of odd visitors in the shape of the large and very beautiful lunar moths which are usually seen very rarely, but are now present in unusual numbers. These lunar moths are the size of a giant butterfly and are a pea-green in color, with long tails.

"The Natural History society some days ago found a big nest of these moths in the Rockville mountains," said Dr. George C. Potts, 1100 North Third, last night. "In this section of the city the lunar moth is unusually numerous. Called a butterfly by some persons, the flier is really a huge moth. It is one of the prettiest creatures of the air."

Dr. Potts did not know the reason why so many of the moths are in evidence, but the weather might have something to do with it, he said.

Moth Plague

© Newsbank

Patriot (Harrisburg) Pennsylvania July 30th 1917

Strange pelt of a wild cat in Yukon Canada

I found this story of a mystery feline pelt in the Evening Post Charleston South Carolina of August 23rd 1923. The Upper Yukon is in central Alaska.

© Newsbank

Trapper Gets Strange Pelt

Robert McConnell, old trapper and hunter of the Upper Yukon region, brought to Fort Yukon, a fine bale of various furs, among them a freak skin which has been exciting comment among fur traders.

Some think the animal from which the pelt was taken an offshoot of the tiger family, and its markings resemble the royal outlaw. The strange skin is thirty-eight inches long, the average width eight inches. It is tan color, the line markings on breast and ribs like a large gray-striped house cat. Some think a cat strayed into the forest and allied with a wild creature in bringing out a new species.—Chicago News.

Fish found with swallowed ring

`Lost Treasure` magazine June 1985

Thanks to **Gary Mangiacopra** for this item.

NOT YOUR AVERAGE FISH STORY

"Catching a fish is no big deal. But catching one that has a ring in its belly makes news. This non-fish tale began last summer when Tommie Jeff Ashcroft went water-skiing near Kirkland Boat Docks at Lake Brownwood, Texas.

Tommie, a resident of Early, Texas, never knew that he had dropped his high school class ring in about 50 feet of water - until he returned home. Then, six months later, Benny " Scooter" Tarver, an avid local fisherman, checked his trotline (sic) at the lake bridge and discovered a 23-pound cat-fish. While cleaning it, he found a ring somewhat muddy and slippery - inside the fish. Engraved lettering "E.H.S." and the owner`s initials "T.J.A." were visible.

Tarver rushed to Early High School and with the help of principal John King, identified the owner as Tommie Ashcroft. Tarver turned the ring over to the boy`s uncle, Tommie Lentz."

" I never thought I would see it again." Ashcroft said. He is very grateful to Tarver for taking the effort to locate the ring`s owner. And he doesn`t plan on taking the ring along the next time he goes water-skiing." (*From the Brownwood Bulletin. Submitted to Lost Treasure magazine by Jay J.Longley , Brownwood, TX.*)

FISH IS A PUZZLE

"What-Is-It" Caught in Missouri Has Fins and Webbed Feet.

ST. JOSEPH, Mo., Sept. 29.—Superintendent M. E. O'Brien of the St. Joseph fish hatchery, who knows more about eels, fish, lizards and all the finny and web-footed tribes that inhabit the waters of the earth, has run fairly against a puzzle in the peculiar personality of an inhabitant of Big Lake, which the fish man "landed" in the pools of the State hatchery yesterday.

The "what-is-it" that is puzzling the fish man is of seventeen and one-half pounds weight and is twenty inches in length. It is built somewhat on the plan of the alligator of the Southern Everglades, has four legs, a head and mouth similar to that of an alligator and teeth like those of the voracious inhabitant of the swamps. It is a vicious fighter and snaps spitefully when molested. Its snakelike eyes suggest that it may be poisonous and a high degree of caution is observed in the care of the Big Lake monster, which, while resembling the crocodile in many particulars, differs from it in that the "what-is-it" is covered all over with scales like those of the buffalo fish, has a finny tail and webbed feet, which suggest a relationship to the duck. Without ears, the odd-looking fish or lizard appears to hear perfectly, and the interesting study of sound waves affecting forms of animal life not equipped with organs of hearing is one in which O'Brien is now absorbed.

Weird Fish

Salt Lake Telegram

September 30th 1904

© Newsbank

Strange Owl

The State , Columbia S. Carolina. December 16th 1938© Newsbank

Woods and Waters

A Strange Owl

By Harry Hampton

To the Editor of Woods and Waters:

I don't know whether I am lucky about running into mystery birds or not. Anyhow, I have another that nobody I have shown it to has been able to name. Nor have they ever seen one like it; and some 40 or more people including old hunters, fishermen and woodsmen have seen it.

This is some specie of owl. It flew in a pecan tree at the side of the house the other afternoon in broad daylight. The jaybirds, mockingbirds and even the chickens raised the dickens. A boy cutting wood in the yard saw it, got the gun from the house and shot it. It isn't as large as a hoot owl, looks nothing like one in either shape or coloring, neither does it look like a screech owl. The markings are beautiful and entirely different from any owl or other bird I ever saw.

If you can imagine a Barred Rock rooster barred with brownish bars across a field of almost gold on the tail and wings, with the same colors mottled from head back to tail you get an idea of what this owl looks like. The head is also very peculiarly marked. There is a frill of very short brown feathers set at a different angle, that incloses the face. Within this frill the coloring is dove color. Instead of being popeyed like all owls I know, this bird's eyes are set back in a recess within this dove colored area. The dove colored feathers run up from base of nose into a sort of comb that divides, and within this division there is an area of brown feathers which the bird seems to have the power to cover up and open at will as the bee martin or kingbird does. The eyes are jet black and about the size of a shoe button. Legs and feet are black. I should say that the wing-spread is close to 28 or 30 inches.

Mr. Shuford, an ex-game warden here, says his bird book designates it as a "wood owl" that makes its home in hollows like the screech owl. One man said it was a North Carolina owl. Why should a North Carolina owl be any different from one here? There is one thing certain it is rare for this section. One man said he had killed one like it in the river swamp, but several old timers seem to doubt that it was the same thing.

I had a box ready to send it over to you, but a young man said he had been tinkering with taxidermy and wanted to try mounting it so I let him have it.

WILLIAM M. REID.

Bishopville.

Alice Brady she has at least two dogs with her—wonder if she delivered that "Love me, love my dog" ultimatum to boy-friend Austin Fairman? Oliver ("Babe") Hardy is gaining dignity and losing rotundity. Often as I visit this studio, I just can't lose the feeling that Doug Fairbanks and

WEBBED FEET ON RATS

NEW RODENT SPECIES PUZZLES NORTH YAKIMA.

Animals Are of Unusual Size, Jet Black, Have Snout Like Hog and Tail Foot Long.

NORTH YAKIMA, Wash., Sept. 5.—(Special.)—Discovery of a new species of rat in this city has stirred the curiosity of the entire community. The animals are of unusual size, jet black in color, have a snout like an Arkansas razor-back hog, and their tails are over a foot in length.

Discovery of the rodents was made by Dr. Philip Frank, County Health Officer, who has been conducting a campaign against all kinds of filth that leads to contagious infection. Six of the animals were captured in the basement of the First National Bank, and two specimens were immediately dispatched to the state laboratories for identification, the naturalists of this city being unable to connect this species with any that they had ever known or read about.

These rats have peculiar webbed feet which might adapt them to the waterfront, but, inasmuch as North Yakima is nearly 200 miles from the seaboard and in an irrigated section, where there is no water aside from that of the irrigation canals, the problem is a hard one to solve.

Until within a very few years there have been no rats at all in the Yakima Valley, and the ordinary species is not very numerous even now.

Mutant Rat?

Oregonian

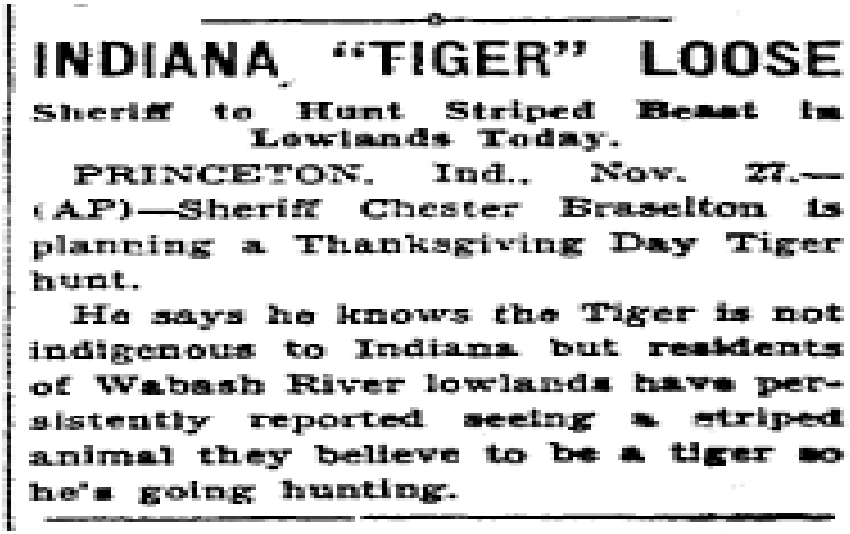
September 6th 1909

© Newsbank

Large pink bat in the Philippines

A friend I work with at Oxfam in Macclesfield told me he saw a large pink bat on the island of Cebu in about 2013. Cebu is a long thin island in the central southern Philippines.

Strange "tiger" in Indiana



INDIANA "TIGER" LOOSE

Sheriff to Hunt Striped Beast In Lowlands Today.

PRINCETON, Ind., Nov. 27.—(AP)—Sheriff Chester Braselton is planning a Thanksgiving Day Tiger hunt.

He says he knows the Tiger is not indigenous to Indiana but residents of Wabash River lowlands have persistently reported seeing a striped animal they believe to be a tiger so he's going hunting.

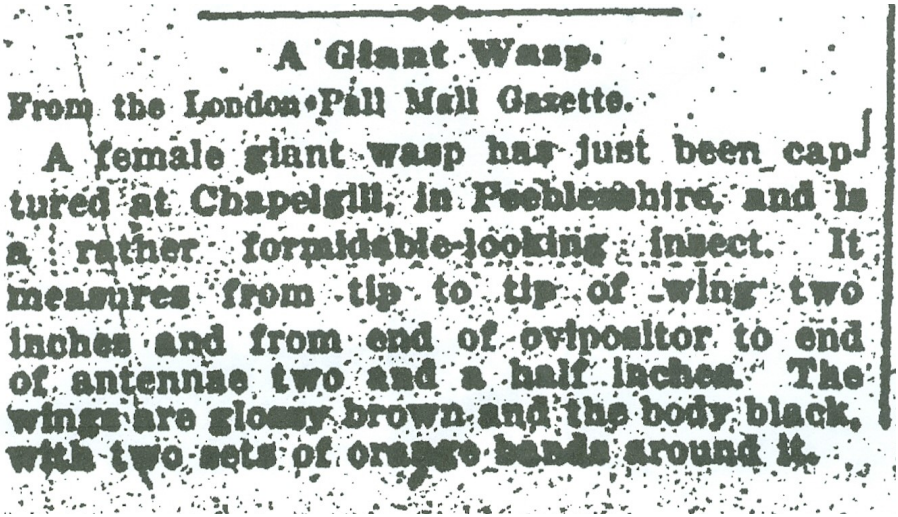
Above: Plain Dealer Ohio November 28th 1935 © Newsbank

Below: Cincinnati Daily Press March 28th 1861 © Newsbank

Sea-Horse

A strange specimen of the kind, known as the "Sea Horse," was caught in the Rappahannock river, Va., a few weeks since. The creature is about five inches in length, has the body and tail of a water dragon, and the well-formed neck and head of a horse. Fins are in the place of ears upon the head, also along the back, and underneath the belly. It is said to be the first of its kind ever caught in the waters of Virginia. It was kept alive for three weeks, during which time it showed a fierce disposition, raising itself, when angered, and making a short, snorting noise, somewhat similar to a horse. It has been placed in the Smithsonian Institute, at Washington, for exhibition.

A giant wasp in Peebleshire Scotland 1901



A Giant Wasp.

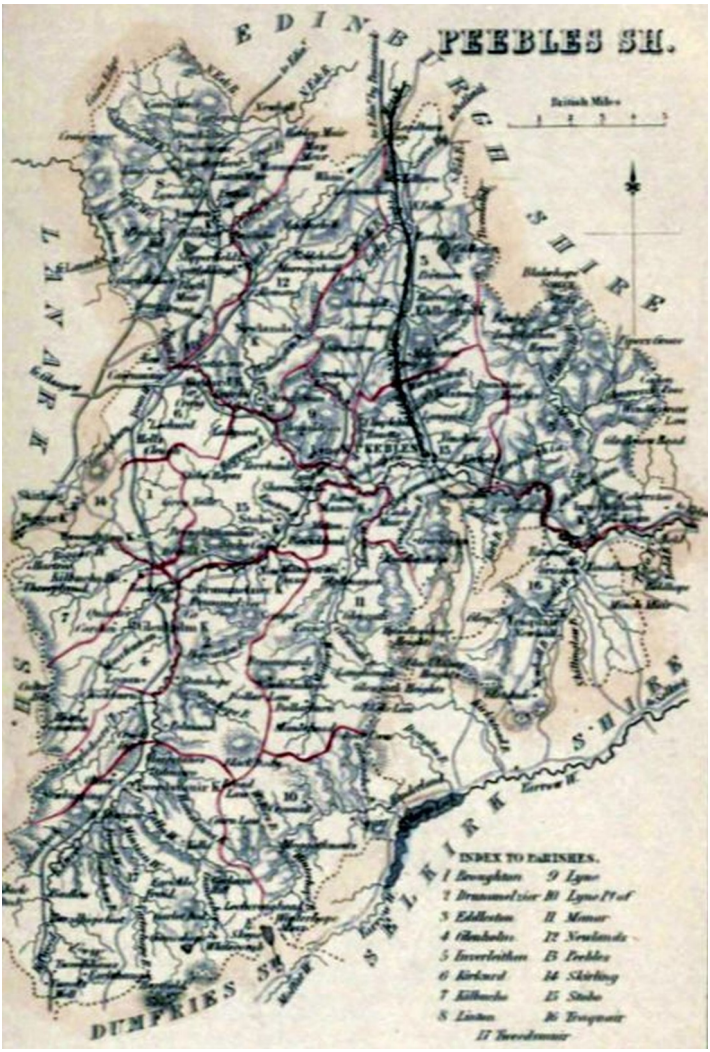
From the London Pall Mall Gazette.

A female giant wasp has just been captured at Chapelgill, in Peebleshire, and is a rather formidable-looking insect. It measures from tip to tip of wing two inches and from end of ovipositor to end of antennae two and a half inches. The wings are glossy brown and the body black, with two sets of orange bands around it.

Evening Star (U.S.A.) September 30th 1901 © Newsbank

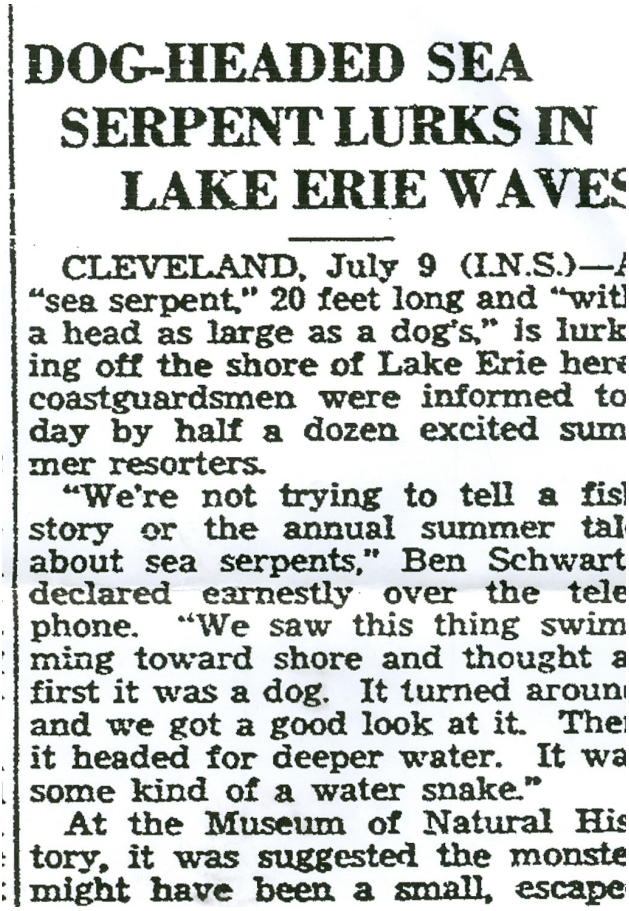
It turns out that 2 inches is about 5 cm which is roughly the size of an Asian hornet, now in the year 2018 an invasive species in the U.K. One of these nasty insects turned up in a cauliflower in Bury see here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-43767438?SThisFB

Apparently the cauliflower had come from Lincolnshire.



Wikipedia Commons: PEEBLESSHIRE Civil Parish map. The Imperial gazetteer of Scotland. Vol.II. by Rev. John Marius Wilson. https://archive.org/stream/imperialgazettee02wilsuoft#page/n616/mode/1up

Dog - headed sea monster



DOG-HEADED SEA SERPENT LURKS IN LAKE ERIE WAVES

CLEVELAND, July 9 (I.N.S.)—A "sea serpent," 20 feet long and "with a head as large as a dog's," is lurking off the shore of Lake Erie here coastguardsmen were informed today by half a dozen excited summer resorters.

"We're not trying to tell a fish story or the annual summer tale about sea serpents," Ben Schwartz declared earnestly over the telephone. "We saw this thing swimming toward shore and thought at first it was a dog. It turned around and we got a good look at it. Then it headed for deeper water. It was some kind of a water snake."

At the Museum of Natural History, it was suggested the monster might have been a small, escape

San Diego Union, California, July 9th 1934 ©Newsbank

Another story of a dog-headed sea monster, off the coast of Colombia, appears on page 26 of Flying Snake volume 1 issue 3, May 2012

Strange insect in court

STRANGE INSECT
SHOWN IN COURT

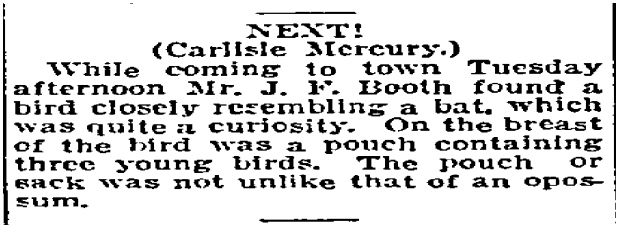
Jacob Mutzer, of Fourth and Chestnut streets, Camden, exhibited in the Recorder's Court yesterday an insect nearly eight inches long. He found it beneath a step at Fourth and Chestnut streets. It was said to be a twig insect brought from the Philippines by returning soldiers.

A similar creature was found in West Philadelphia last week.

Philadelphia Inquirer August 31st 1901 © Newsbank

Interesting the juxtaposition of a mystery animal and a long forgotten aspect of U.S. history, namely the occupation of the Philippines after the war between the U.S and Spain in 1898

Bird with a pouch



NEXT!
(Carlisle Mercury.)

While coming to town Tuesday afternoon Mr. J. F. Booth found a bird closely resembling a bat, which was quite a curiosity. On the breast of the bird was a pouch containing three young birds. The pouch or sack was not unlike that of an opossum.

Lexington Herald Kentucky July 18th 1922© Newsbank

Orang Pendek?

Wisconsin Weekly Advocate October 13th 1904 © Newsbank

IS IT THE MISSING LINK?

New Kind of Monkey Is Found in Darkest Java.

The Brussels Soir says a new animal, much resembling a monkey, but much nearer in habits and culture to man, has been discovered in Java.

A merchant named Van Beuren happened to get lost in a forest and was obliged to spend the night under a tree, on which he discovered a giant nest with a circular opening measuring eighteen inches in diameter. This nest was occupied by a family of animals much resembling the ordinary monkeys, with the difference that their heads were covered with long, brown hair.

After his return to civilization M. Van Beuren told an American scientist, Dr. Werdehouse, of his discovery and they returned together to the spot, where they spent several months studying the habits of the animals.

Contrary to the custom of monkeys, these animals, which the natives call "asch perrizlz," are very fond of bathing, and the females usually adorn their necks with collars made of fruit kernels.

They take good care of their little ones, but seem to be little prolific and near extinction. The mothers rock their little ones, singing like human beings in an articulate language of very few words. They eat fruits, birds' eggs and fishes, and like to be near a fire, although unable to light one.

Dr. Werdehouse, who classified these animals at pithecanthropes, has been unable to capture any of them and had not the heart to kill one even in the interest of science. A scientific expedition has been formed to explore the island and capture one of the animals if possible.

Monster Turtle

Kalamazoo Gazette June 2nd 1907 © Newsbank

Monster Turtle Carries Boat Inland

Two Galesburg Men Startled to See Their Boat March Up Bank of Lake.

(Gazette Special Service.)

Galesburg, Mich., June 1.—George Whittaker and Solomon Truebill went bass fishing this morning and met with varying success until noon, when having no lunch with them, they fastened their boat near the bank and proceeded to a neighboring farm house to dine, with very satisfactory results.

Upon returning to the point where they had left their boat, they were surprised to find it gone, but the first was no comparison to the second wonder, when they saw their craft some 50 feet inland and still moving.

In relating the circumstance, Mr. Whittaker confesses that he was "pretty near scared," but was relieved when a monster turtle was discovered under the boat, having evidenly risen in its landward course and being sufficiently powerful, had carried its load to the place of discovery and investigation.

The turtle which was a very large one, was secured with the assistance of two neighboring farmers, the boat was returned to the water and fishing resumed.

Dog poo as generator of light

Macclesfield Express March 7th 2018

Belinda Ryan

This bizarre but apparently genuine story caught my attention and at first I thought it might be a premature April Fool`s joke but I include it here as a tribute to the eccentricity of the inhabitants of my home town! This is an abbreviated version of the entire story:

Bright idea over what to do with dog mess

" Cheshire East has agreed to look into the possibility of using dog poo to power some street lights. Councillor Janet Clowes, cabinet member for social care and integration , agreed to look into the option

at the council`s cabinet meeting after it was suggested by a member of the public who had heard of a scheme invented by Brian Harper.

Speaking at the meeting Councillor Clowes said the council was looking at rolling out a scheme this month to crack down on dog owners who don`t pick up after their pets...Mrs Helliwell, who is also an Alsager Town councillor, said she had contacted Brian Harper, who had invented a system to power street lights using dog faeces , and "he`ll be more than happy to talk to [Cheshire East] council."

"She [Mrs Helliwell] said: " Dog poo can be used to light street lighting and I`ve spoken to the inventor, Brian Harper. They are looking for locations from early pioneering councils. He`ll be more than happy to talk to the council."

What I`d like to know (says Dr Devo) is,how does this actually WORK in practice? The poo generating light I mean. Will poo generated light ever become more popular than say coal or nuclear powered light? WOOF WOOF!! GRRRRRRRRRRRR!!

Does a French bat migrate to Japan?

A little snippet of information can be found in a book called simply Exploring Caves by C.H.D Cullingford (Oxford University Press, 1951) page 127 , that a certain French man named M.Casteret believed that a French species of bat migrated to Japan for the winter.

Man eating snakes in Fiji during World War 2

All I have on this matter is the following quote from `It Came From Ohio` (2012) by James Renner p.8 " My grandfather ,who served in the Pacific theatre in WW II, sometimes spoke of giant snakes - big

enough to eat men - that lived in the jungles of Fiji." Research is ongoing.

Fearsome horned monsters captured by Japanese

World`s News Sydney November 15th 1902

Thanks to **Loes Modderman** for this item. Source unknown.

"A recent Japanese mail brought the story of a desperate struggle with and capture of two " sea-serpents" by fishermen off the coast of Japan. One was a male , and measured 48 ft., and the other a female 39 ft. They had horns 2ft 6 inches long, and ears of about 2ft. The male became entangled in the nets of the fishermen, and as they were hauling it to shore the monster came to the surface and bellowed.

Finally, finding that they could not take the serpent shorewards in the nets, they got firearms from the schooners and shot the beast. As the male turned over in its death agony the female came to the surface and lashed the water in her fury.She also was killed, and the remains of both taken ashore, and thence to Osaka, where they were exhibited. It is the opinion of scientists that the serpents being disturbed by seismic disturbances have abandoned the deep."

A very strange crocodile story from New Jersey in 1848

North American September 26th 1848

"The antiquarians are puzzled with the skeleton of an alligator or crockodile , some 30ft long, recently found at Eatontown, in Monmouth county, ten miles from Long Branch, in a marl bed 6 feet

below the surface; and the more especially as an ancient coin was found with it. This the Literary World describes as about the size of a dollar; its composition in which there is a large share of silver, being probably Corinthian brass. On the face of it is the figure of a lion, with the date 6 - 48 in Arabic numerals; on the reverse, amid several illegible letters, the fragmentary words—"AGE,PROCON,LATIA,MO." may be deciphered, surrounding two large letters, in the centre one of which is the Greek II with an (sic) R interwoven with it. It is shrewdly suggested that a crocodile must have digested a Roman soldier in some African river two thousand years ago, and come over to the New World with the coin in his maw."

Newark Advertiser

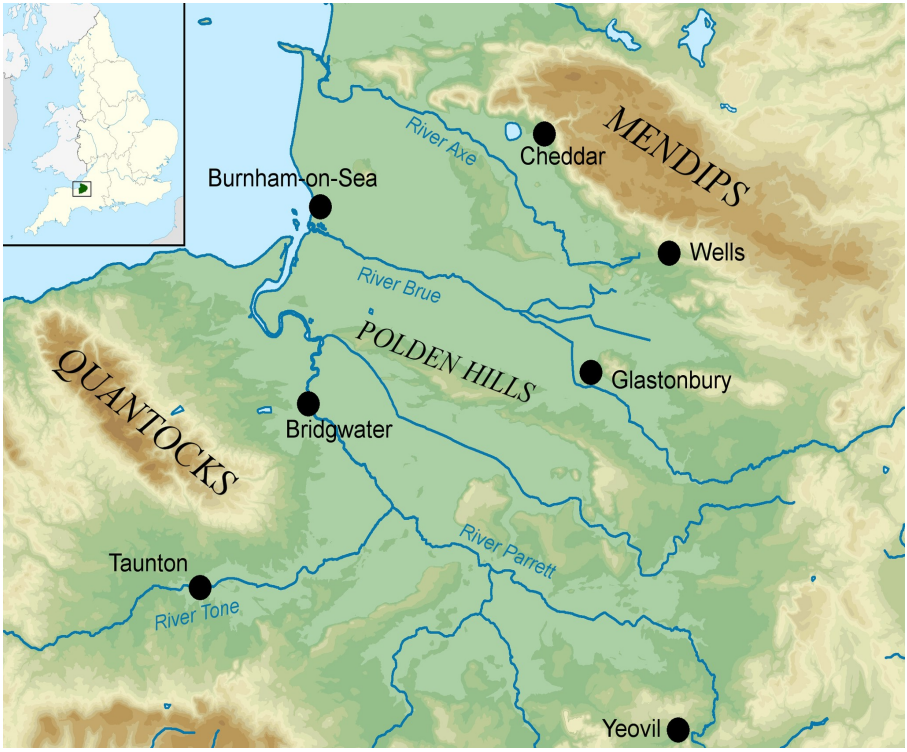
Deadly Black Triton in Somerset Moors - late 19th Century

I found this very intriguing snippet in a book in Scrivener`s Bookshop in Buxton, Derbyshire, (always a good place for Fortean zoological oddities and cryptozoology in books, etc) called `In The West Country` by Francis A.Knight (c. 1900? ) "Slender newts, too, swarm in the still water, and great black tritons, the terror of the moorfolk, in whose eyes even the viper is hardly more venomous." (Page 186.) I have tried to find the publication date with some effort but it`s nowhere online, I suggest c.1900.

Now this is very interesting because a long ago the triton was thought to be a kind of mermaid or large sea snail, according to Wikipedia. Or perhaps a salamander. Francis Knight specifically says they were distinguished from newts, or perhaps they were newts but of a darker colouration? The Somerset Moors are in north Somerset and the Som

erset Levels not far away. Bob Skinner commented on Facebook on April 14th “ Newts, in folklore are frequently considered as dangerous, and particularly there was a fear of them being ingested either by drinking water from ponds or streams, or by them crawling into the open mouth of someone sleeping on the ground near where they live! They were supposed to survive alive in the stomach or gut of the victim (cf. "bosom snake" beliefs”.)

Jon Downes mentioned that the “triton” sounded like a kind of mollusc. Such as Charonia a very large sea snail that inhabits temperate and tropical seas world-wide. It is commonly known as Triton`s Trumpet or the Triton snail, see image below. The shell of this species can grow to more than half a metre in length.(1)



Somerset Levels Wikipedia Creative Commons Ordnance Survey Open Data

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charonia

letters and e—mails

E - mail from **Richard Colbourne**

December 14th 2017

Dear Rich

“May I suggest that the reason the Natterjack toad is living in Kerry and why it is living near Castlemaine Harbour - indeed; why it lives in Ireland at all - is because it was taken to Ireland by sea from Spain. British historians long ridiculed the claim of the Irish that, whilst they may have originated further afield, they arrived in the British Isles from where they had been living, in Spain: however ; in recent years DNA evidence has proven that the Irish did indeed migrate from Spain (or other people with similar DNA settled there.)

During the last Glaciation both Great Britain and Ireland were covered in ice - at least one professional geologist says, entirely and it is really very questionable as to whether any flora and fauna survived the glaciation and how many species found their own way back here, rather than as I suspect being brought here deliberately and accidentally by human migrants.

Perhaps the arrival of the Natterjack , Bufo calamita, in Kerry, was

rather more recent than other plants and animals: this might account for its limited distribution.

On Nov 23rd 2017 I received this e-mail from **Paul Garner:**

Dear Richard,

"As you know I`ve just discovered your journal and I enjoyed reading the latest issue (Vol. 4 No. 12, September 2017). A few thoughts occurred to me as I was reading:

"In Pursuit of the Patagonian Plesiosaur" (pp 4-6). Karl Shuker points out that this cryptid is one of the most publicised South American lake monsters, and that seems to be the case. Readers interested in the South American reports, including those from Argentina, can find more in books such as Peter Costello`s *In Search of Lake Monsters* (Garnstone Press, 1974) and Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe`s *The Field Guide to Lake Monsters, Sea Serpents, and Other Mystery Denizens of the Deep* (Tarcher/Penguin, 2003).

"Elephants found at sea or washed ashore" (pp 36-41). It seems likely to my mind that many of these " elephants" can be explained as decaying whale carcasses, especially when the body is described as having been found in an advanced state of decomposition. I was reminded of Trunko, the famous globster with "snowy-white fur" and an elephant-like "trunk" that was washed ashore at Margate, South Africa, on 25th October 1924. Photos and descriptions suggest that this was a blubbery mass of whale tissue, with decayed collagen fibres giving the appearance of a fur-like covering. " A Coypu in Gloucestershire " (p.48). This report reminded me of seeing a coypu in the rivers near Welney in Norfolk when I was a boy. This would have been in the 1970s and early 1980s. My grandad, Josh Scott, was the first warden of the Wildfowl Trust centre at Welney, and so I spent a lot of time with him on the Welney Washes.

Coypu were originally introduced to Great Britain from South America for fur farming, but escapes and releases led to them becoming established in the wild. Many thousands were at large in East Anglia at one time, with their big orange incisors, swimming in the rivers. I also remember being with my grandad on occasion when he hauled one of his eel nets out of the water to find that a coypu had become trapped inside and drowned.

Finally , "What is it?" (p.68). The photograph is not very clear, but to me the "strange object" washed up on the shore near Newcastle, New South Wales, seems to be nothing more mysterious than a sea urchin with its spines intact. The purple sea urchin (*Heliocidaris rythrogrammais*) is a common species in New South Wales , southern Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

I`m looking forward to the next issue - and catching up with the back editions!

Best wishes , Paul Garner

A letter from **Richard George** dated April 6th 2018

Dear Richard,

Sad news further to my piece on cryptozoology in pop and rock:Tom Rapp, guiding spirit of Pearls Before Swine and manatee conservationist, has died aged 70. A good introduction to his work is PBS Live at Syracuse University 1971, available on You Tube.

From The Flower (Did you Dream of Unicorns)

Did you dream of unicorns?

Did you dream of broken horns?

Did you dream of roses

Or did you dream of thorns?

You knew that people die

Before their bodies do

He said “Why not use your body

Before it uses you?”…

Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus

As the wafer breaks

Lord we are not worthy

To enter in this place

Then you dream of unicorns

Then you dream of broken horns

Then you dream of roses

And then you dream no more

With best wishes

Richard

A letter from **Richard George** on Steller`s Sea Cow dated April 13th 2018

Dear Richard, “ Many thanks for turning me onto Lars Thomas and the “mer-sow” (1) - I`ll look into it. A smaller version of this might explain some of the puzzling alleged mermaid sightings off Hebridean islands in the 19th century.

1. Richard George is referring to a comment in `Weird Waters`by Lars Thomas

Glad you liked the Tom Rapp lyric I sent. There`s actually a bit more of a unicorn connection here, because (something I should have noticed earlier) he chose for the cover to his 1970 LP *The Use of Ashes* a French or Flemish late 15th century tapestry called *The Hunt of the Unicorn VI, The Unicorn is Brought to the Castle.* The unicorn is very definitely dead or dying at this point, punctured by three villainous-looking men with lances.

With best wishes,

Richard

Dear Richard, May 11 2018

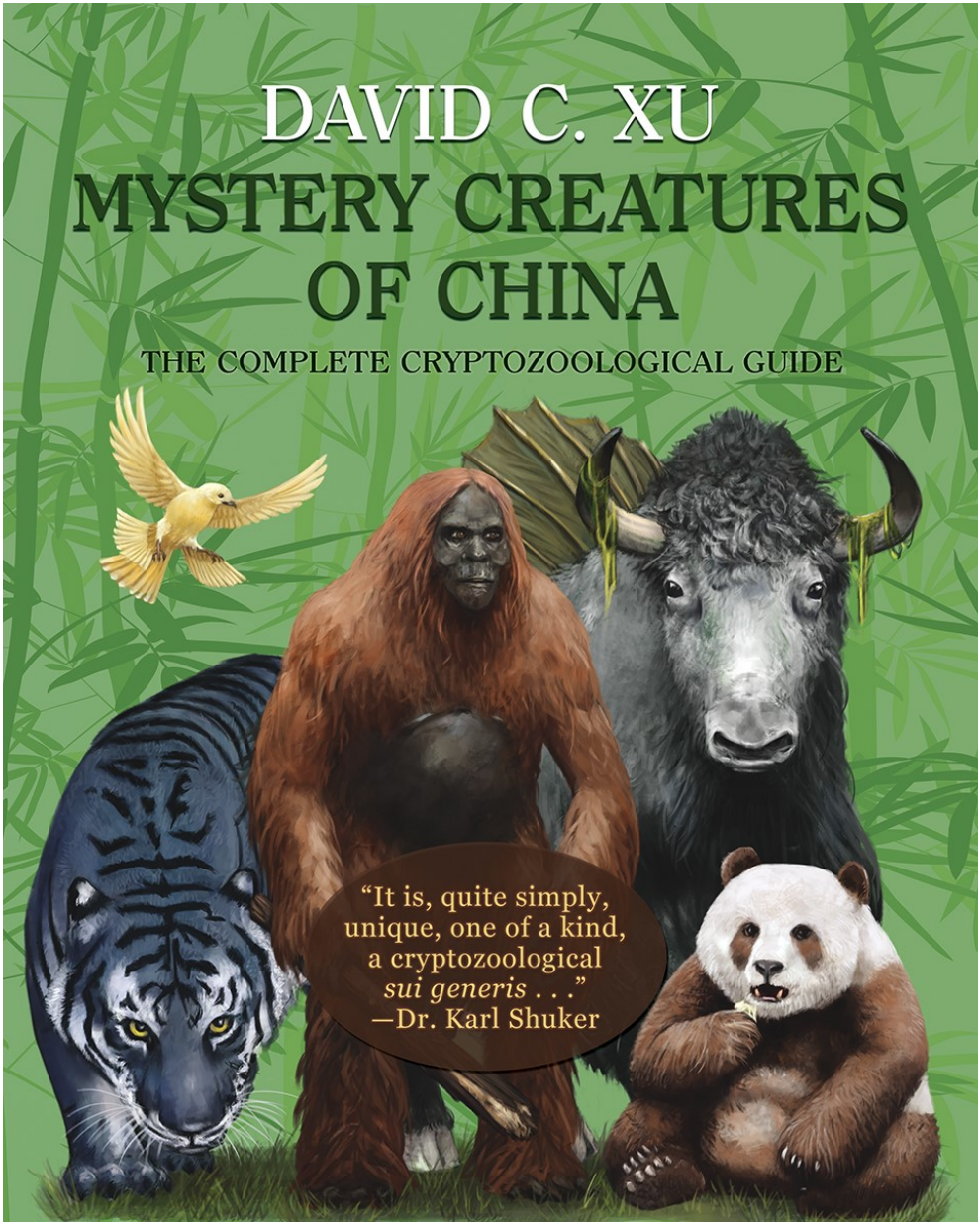
Many thanks for Stones article (2). One of Tom Rapp`s finest songs, oddly enough, was *Butterflies* (on the album *Beautiful Lies You Could Live In)*.

Botanists might be equally outraged by Moby Grape: as their first LP`s promotional do in 1967, among many other gimmicks, ten thousand purple orchids were sent down from the ceiling of the Avalon Ballroom, San Francisco, to be trampled by revellers.

Wbw,

Richard

2. Richard is here referring to an article I sent him from the Spring 2018 issue of Butterfly magazine titled Stones in the Park about how in 1969 the Rolling Stones released thousands of white butterflies during a gig in Hyde Park.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